SWINBURNE'S DRAMAS

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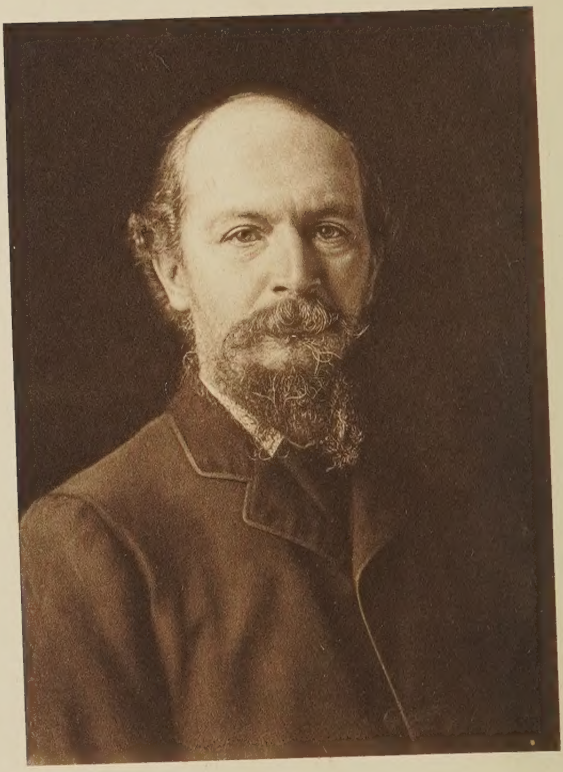

SWINBURNE'S DRAMAS

Swinburne

SELECTED AND EDITED

BY

ARTHUR BEATTY, PH.D.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFATORY NOTE v

INTRODUCTION vii

DRAMAS:

Atalanta in Calydon 1

Erechtheus 103

Mary Stuart 179

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SWINBURNE'S WRITINGS . 359

BIBLIOGRAPHIES 360

LIVES 360

CRITICISMS 361

NOTES 363

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PREFATORY NOTE

Atalanta in Calydon and *Erechtheus* have been included in this volume of Swinburne's selected dramas because they are among the most characteristic products of his dramatic genius. Taken together, they stand among a very small company of poems which embody the spirit of Greek tragedy with any degree of completeness. Moreover, they contain some of Swinburne's finest lyrical verse; and these two considerations make inevitable the inclusion of the two plays, in spite of the fact that the author himself has classified them with his poems.

The poet himself decided upon the representative of his plays written on the model of Shakespeare, for he was of the opinion that he had never written anything worthier of discriminating appreciation than *Mary Stuart.*

For the translation of the Greek dedication of *Atalanta in Calydon*, and for help in tracing Swinburne's Greek sources, I am indebted to my wife.

ARTHUR BEATTY.

JANUARY 1, 1909.

INTRODUCTION

I

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE was born in Chapel Street, London, April 5, 1837. He was the eldest child of Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, who belonged to an old Northumbrian family which can be traced back as far as Sir William de Swinburne, in the time of Henry II. His mother was Lady Jane Henrietta, a daughter of George, third Earl of Ashburnham, of lineage at least as old as the Conquest.

Although he was born in London, he does not properly belong to the honorable line of London bred and born English poets, as his family was merely making a short stay in Belgravia at the time of his birth. His youth was nourished in other scenes, for he spent his boyhood in the two geographical extremes of England; the winters at East Dene, Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight, and the summers at the home of his grandfather, Sir John Edward Swinburne, at Capheaton, in Northumberland. Thus he passed all his early years within sound and sight of the sea, and so we may understand why his poems are so uniformly inspired by the ocean. Indeed, by lineage and by early associations, he is a veritable "Thalassius," as he calls himself in his noble autobiographical poem, — a child, or fosterling, of the sun and the wave. To adopt the last line of *Erechtheus*, no poet has so fully realized "the friendship and fame of the sea."

In his twelfth year he was sent to Eton College, where he remained until his seventeenth year. In 1856 he went as a commoner to Balliol College, Oxford, where he spent four years; but he left without taking a degree. While at Oxford,

he mingled with a congenial group of men, among whom were the late John Nichol and G. Birkbeck Hill; and at this time began his lifelong friendship with William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Edward Burne-Jones. During his undergraduate career he showed remarkable proficiency in French, Italian, and the classics; and that he possessed the literary impulse is shown by the publication of four articles in a college magazine, *Undergraduate Papers*. Swinburne later called these articles "crudities"; but, while they are marked by the weaknesses of youth, they show that he was already interested in the works of Marlowe and Webster, and that he was influenced by the early work of William Morris.

In 1860, the year in which he left Oxford, he published his first volume of poetry, made up of two tragedies, *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond*. In 1861 began his Wanderjahre. He went to Italy with his family and visited Walter Savage Landor, whom he fervently admired. After a few weeks he returned to England, and for a period of five years published very little; until, in 1865, he captured the critical world with *Atalanta in Calydon*. In this year he also published *Chastelard*, the first part of the *Mary Stuart* trilogy. The following year, 1866, he collected his miscellaneous poems, some written early and some late, in the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. The storm which *Atalanta* and the *Poems and Ballads* raised is a matter of literary history: the protests of those who objected to the atheism of *Atalanta* and the content of some of the *Poems and Ballads*, and the astonished applause of those who were captured by the new and enchanting melodies alike contributed to the poet's fame.

There is but little to record concerning Swinburne's life, save the publication of his successive volumes in prose and verse; and the dates of these will be found in the Chronological

List of his writings. For the special purpose of this volume, however, we may note that in 1874 *Bothwell*, the second part of the *Mary Stuart* trilogy, appeared, and was followed in 1881 by the concluding part, *Mary Stuart*. In 1876 *Erechtheus* was published, the second and last drama after the Greek form. About 1872 he formed a friendship with the critic, novelist, and poet, Theodore Watts-Dunton, which culminated in their taking up residence together at The Pines, Putney Hill, near London, in 1879. Here he lived apart from the great world of men and affairs, in single-hearted devotion to the twin arts of poetry and criticism, until his death, on April 10, 1909, just five days after his seventy-second birthday. In late years a deafness had increased his natural inclination for a retired life, and he rarely met visitors. His chief recreation was long rambles across Putney Heath. His own wishes had been for a grave near the sea; and in obedience to them, his body was placed in the family vault at East Dene, Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight.

With the death of Swinburne the great Victorian generation is ended. We are still too near to the Victorian age to be certain that we understand its essential tendencies, or to assign to any of its poets his relative rank, except in the most tentative way. Of this much, however, we may be certain: that the age was profoundly influenced by the scientific movement; and the poets may be ranked and classified with regard to their interpretation of the results of the discoveries in the natural sciences and the attendant readjustments in theological, ethical, and Biblical criticism. Here Browning is ranged; and here, too, we find Tennyson, and in the supreme place as the almost official interpreter of scientific results to the human spirit. But we must remember that both Tennyson and Browning came early, and that *In Memoriam* antedates the time when

the results of the newer science were known. In a very real sense, Browning and Tennyson do not interpret the results of *The Origin of Species*. Neither one was young enough in 1859.

Here is the importance of Swinburne and Matthew Arnold; and both take a position directly contradictory to the faith of Tennyson and Browning. Atheism, and unfaith in the God of the time, is the dominant note of *Atalanta in Calydon*, and *Poems and Ballads*, with many youthful indiscretions and excesses. The same unbelief, with all restraint, had been expressed ten years earlier in Arnold's *Empedocles* and *Poems*. This attitude both poets continued to maintain throughout their careers, Arnold reaching his climax in *Thyrsis*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, and the two *Obermanns;* and Swinburne culminating in the equally austere morality of *Thalassius*, and *The Altar of Righteousness*. Those who believe that Swinburne has nothing to say should remember that as that stern moralist Henry Sidgwick calmly and manfully faced death he comforted himself by reciting portions of *Super Flumina Babylonis*.

But the attitude of Swinburne and Henry Sidgwick was not that of the great majority of Victorians; and, in this as well as in other ways, Swinburne was in frank opposition to the main tendencies of his times. He began his career as an opponent of the idyllic school, and continued to assert a broader art and a more sweeping, various melody; he worshipped heroes, as well as gods, impossible to his generation; as a critic of literature he was a Romantic in method, with unbounded enthusiasms and hatreds; as a critic of society he protested against the low ideals of duty and art prevalent in his day. In all these he ran counter to his time; and to the great multitude he was a mere man of words, as he is to many yet. But in the face of his complete works such an opinion must be changed

for a truer estimate. There are signs that he has a secure hold upon the future; for he has long been the model of young poets, and in their verse we can see the future possibilities of the new music which is so amply preluded in his work. Moreover, we can see already how truly he judged the imperfect ideals of his own age — the age of the "Morte d'Albert." No doubt much of his writings will be forgotten, — and in this he is not alone by any means, — but in the coming years, when the accounts of the Victorian era can be more accurately cast, without a doubt he will be one of the most significant figures, both as interpreter and artist.

II

In the Introduction to the *Selected Poems*, the companion volume in this series, Swinburne's wonderful gift of rhythm was dwelt upon as the most marked characteristic of his genius. This is shown in his very earliest work; and in 1865, with the appearance of *Atalanta in Calydon*, the English reading public was given a new lesson in the rhythmic and lyric possibilities of the English language. Here was a new voice, to which the language lent itself without any of those discords or harshnesses which are so characteristic of the poet who is not a born singer. *When the Hounds of Spring*, that magical first chorus, marks the climax of buoyant lyric melody in nineteenth-century English poetry. Almost as good is the wonderful chorus on Aphrodite Anadyomene — Venus rising from the sea —

> "We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
> Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove,"

with its echo in the later chorus,

> "Behold thou art over fair, thou art over wise,
> The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light in thine eyes."

Then, too, there is the profoundly moving passage on the death of Meleager, so justly singled out by Swinburne for special praise, rising at times in its various music to such a passage as, —

> "Unto each man his fate;
> Unto each as he saith
> In whose fingers the weight
> Of the world is as breath;
> Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death,"

or lines like

"Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of Pontic seas,"

or

"Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak;"

and as we read the whole we understand why the young poets went about chanting to one another these "new and astonishing melodies." In the blank verse, too, there is the now famous speech of the Herald who describes the killing of the Calydonian boar; and this with more than one other passage indicates that in *Atalanta* we have narrative blank verse of extraordinary vitality and flexibility.

No doubt the author is perfectly just when he says that the play is too exuberant and effusive in its dialogue, and too irregular in the occasional license of its choral verse to reproduce for English readers the likeness of a Greek tragedy. No doubt, too, he is right in saying that it is too long for a Greek play, a form in which every element and character is subordinated to a dominating mood or idea; and in expressing his doubts that the whole is greater than any part of it; for we do not feel the action of the play as a whole, but rather remember it by its crowning passages of lyric song. All this is, doubtless, to say

that the poem does not produce the unity of impression which a Greek play ought to produce, and therefore fails of complete success. But if it fails, it fails in good company. Mason's *Caractacus* (1759), though written on a freer model, has scarcely the merit of possessing even passages which are memorable; while Matthew Arnold's *Merope*, written after the strictest rules of Greek drama, has everything that such a play should have except interest and life. Arnold's earlier and happier venture, *Empedocles*, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas*, are each remembered for their crowning passages, such as the concluding song of Callicles in *Empedocles:* —

> "'Tis Apollo comes leading
> His choir the Nine.
> — The leader is fairest,
> But all are divine,"

or such passages in *Prometheus Unbound* as

> "On a poet's lips I slept,"

and

> "On the brink of the night and the morning
> My coursers are wont to respire,"

or the chant of a renewed world in *Hellas:* —

> "The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return."

Perhaps, with the possible exception of *Erechtheus*, of all the attempts at remaking the forms of Greek tragedy into English, Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is the only one which is thought of as a whole, with due subordination of the various parts.

We notice even in Swinburne's lyric poems, dramatic treatment of strange and unorthodox passions and ideas; and this

brings us to an aspect of *Atalanta in Calydon* which has called down on it and its author condemnation from moralist and classicist alike. The particular thought, or idea, which is insisted on in the play is the denial of the Gods. The moralists of 1865 were shocked at the atheism of the new poet; and the classicists declared rightly that atheism was most un-Greek. What was not then recognized and what has not even yet been sufficiently recognized, is the fact that the play is not an isolated statement of rationalism in the form of a free questioning of traditional beliefs. The poet has so respectable an authority as Matthew Arnold, who had published *Empedocles on Etna* in 1852, in which the Greek form is used for the most rationalistic questionings, such as these: —

"Nor only, in the intent
To attach blame elsewhere,
Do we at will invent
Stern Powers who make their care
To embitter human life, malignant Deities;

"But, next, we would reverse
The scheme ourselves have spun,
And what we made to curse
We now would lean upon,
And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.
. . . . . .

"Fools! That in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do;
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest."

In essence these stanzas are the same in thought as the less restrained and more burning lines of *Atalanta*. Both authors wrote under the immediate influence of Hellenism, and both chose the Hellenic form to express their revolt against estab-

lished beliefs. That *Atalanta* drew down the curses of the orthodox may be accounted for by the fact that the ideas contained in the play were expressed with greater boldness, and so attracted more general attention. For this reason, *Atalanta*, with the *Poems and Ballads*, is one of the most typical productions of the middle decades of the nineteenth century, as marking the breaking down of the old orthodox modes of thinking under the combined influences of rationalism. Viewed from this standpoint, the spirit of revolt, which seemed to contemporaries the play's greatest fault, becomes to posterity its greatest glory.

III

Of *Erechtheus* not much need be said by way of criticism. It is preferred by its author as a Greek play, because it is a nearer approach to being a unified whole, and more perfectly expresses a single mood or idea. It is more classic in design, and on its appearance in 1876 did not arouse any opposition because of objectionable doctrines contained in it. It has a larger measure of the Greek calm, because the author had passed from passionate revolt against established beliefs to the love of country, the sea, and Athens as the ideal country of the soul. The play belongs to the same period in Swinburne's life as the great *Ode to Athens*, and they should be read together for the proper understanding of both. They each represent the clarifying of Swinburne's ideal of classic form, the *Ode to Athens* being his closest approximation to the Greek ode, and the *Erechtheus* his closest approximation to the Attic dramatic form. But they both have the defects of their qualities. Both are triumphs of classical scholarship applied to artistic form; but this very fact stands in the way of popular appreciation. They both teem with passages which are echoes, adaptations,

or direct translations of Greek plays and poems, and demand complete familiarity with Greek literature for their proper appreciation. Thus the *Erechtheus* has less of immediate appeal to the average reader than has *Atalanta*, and is marked by the coldness and lack of vitality which seem almost inseparable from close imitations of the classic dramatic form.

But *Erechtheus* is no less marked by the poet's wonderful gift of rhythm. The second chorus, *Out of the north wind grief came forth*, and the sixth chorus, *Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song*, are chosen by the author for his volume of *Selections*, and the latter is singled out for the same praise as the antiphonal lament for the dying Meleager in *Atalanta*. These choruses are magnificent in their involutions of rhyme-scheme and stanzaic form to a degree rarely attained in the English Ode. For magnificent length of line and sweep of verse these stand unsurpassed; while the final chorus, combining the purest music of verse with love of country and of the sea, is the best-beloved in the whole play: —

"From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain is poured of thanksgiving,
My country, my mother, for thee,
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy sight and a name ever living
At heart of thy people to be.
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they shall turn from afar
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of these pyres for a star.
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who hate thee shall see and take warning,
Our mother that makest us free;
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the waves that make war on their morning,
And friendship and fame of the sea."

IV

Mary Stuart was published in 1881, and is the third part of the trilogy on the subject of the fateful Queen of Scots. *Chastelard*, the first play in the trilogy, was published in 1865, the year of *Atalanta in Calydon*, and told the story of Queen Mary from her love for the poet-courtier Chastelard to his execution in 1562. Swinburne himself says that the play was "conceived and partly written by a youngster not yet emancipated from servitude to college rule"; but even thus early he had formed in his mind the main outlines of the tangled story as he interpreted it later in *Bothwell* and *Mary Stuart*. The Queen is conceived of as a fateful, beautiful creature, who loves men to their ruin; and Chastelard is sacrificed to save her honor. But Queen though Mary is, she is not stronger than fate; for there is another woman who loves Chastelard, one of the Queen's Maries, Mary Beaton. For twenty-five years she remembered the murdered man whom she adored, and exults when Fate is triumphant at the execution of Mary at Fotheringay in 1587. The play introduces the four Maries, — Mary Beaton, Mary Seyton, Mary Carmichael, and Mary Hamilton, — Murray, and Darnley, the Queen's husband, who play an important part in the second part of the trilogy, *Bothwell*, which appeared in 1874.

Bothwell has the distinction of being the longest play in the English language, being made up of some sixty scenes. It carries the story from March 9, 1566, to May 16, 1568, including the murder of Rizzio; the birth of Mary's son, who later became James I of England; the murder of her husband Darnley, and her marriage to Bothwell, "the hardy and able ruffian" and the reputed slayer of Darnley; the defeat of her forces at Langside, and her flight over the Solway to exile. One of the

most striking figures in the play is John Knox, who withstands the Queen to her face, because of her "proud mind, crafty wit, with indurate heart against God and his truth."

The great length of *Bothwell* and its general method are thus explained by Swinburne in the *Dedicatory Epistle* which is addressed to Theodore Watts-Dunton and which prefaces the complete edition of his Poems: "That ambitious, conscientious, and comprehensive piece of work is, of course, less properly definable as a tragedy than by the old Shakespearean term of a chronicle history. The radical difference between tragic history and tragedy of either the classic or romantic order, and consequently between the laws which govern the one and the principles which guide the other, you have yourself made clear and familiar to all capable students. This play of mine was not, I think, inaccurately defined as an epic drama in the French verses of dedication which were acknowledged by the greatest of all French poets in a letter from which I dare only quote one line of Olympian judgment and godlike generosity: 'Occuper ces deux cimes, cela n'est donné qu' à vous.' Nor will I refrain from the confession that I cannot think it an epic or a play in which any one part is sacrificed to any other, any subordinate figure mishandled or neglected or distorted or effaced for the sake of the predominant central person. And though this has nothing or less than nothing to do with any question of poetic merit or demerit, of dramatic success or unsuccess, I will add that I took as much care and pains as though I had been writing or compiling a history of the period to do loyal justice to all the historic figures which came within the scope of my dramatic or poetic design. There is not one which I have designedly altered or intentionally modified; it is, of course, for others to decide whether there is one which is not the living likeness of an actual or imaginable man."

Mary Stuart, which was published in 1881, takes up the story from August 14, 1586, and carries it down to the end, February 18, 1587. Queen Elizabeth here appears as the great antagonist of Mary Stuart, and the play is in large part a picture of the struggle between these two famous women. But Fate, unchained by Mary's own blunders and crimes, pursues her relentlessly, and she dies on the scaffold at Fotheringay.

Swinburne tells us that his "first if not his strongest ambition was to do something worth doing, and not utterly unworthy of a young countryman of Marlowe the teacher, and Webster the pupil of Shakespeare, in the line of work which those three poets had left as a possibly unattainable example for ambitious Englishmen," and he goes on to say that his first book bore evidences of that ambition in every line. No doubt many of the characteristics of the trilogy derive from Shakespeare, and it is true that we can see a vigor not unlike Marlowe's and an intensity and narrowness of character drawing not unlike Webster's. The subject-matter, too, suggests that of these three dramatists, especially that of Webster. But it is eminently fitting that the trilogy should be dedicated to Victor Hugo; for it is in Victor Hugo rather than in either Marlowe, Webster, or Shakespeare that the play finds a literary godfather. Both *Cromwell* and the *Mary Stuart* trilogy aim to reproduce an epoch as well as a person; and *Cromwell*, as well as *Ruy Blas*, *Hernani*, and *Les Burgraves*, has a breathless bustle of movement, together with a rather intense and extravagant emotionalism attached to character and incident, which may be seen in the early portion of the trilogy, and even in *Mary Stuart*. We may call it lyricism, as contrasted with the actualism of character and action of the Elizabethan drama. Connected with this is the stressing of a special character or a situation in each act by calling sometimes undue attention to his or her personality,

with the result that the general action of the play becomes rather hazy in outline and issue. This haziness is true of Swinburne at least, and it seems to be a result of Hugo's method. The external sign of this tendency to call special attention to persons and incidents is the habit in both authors of giving names to the various acts of the plays.

Another point of union between the dramatic methods of Hugo and Swinburne is the free use of declamation of a very intensely emotional and rhetorical kind, and a most un-Shakespearean disproportion between word and action. *Mary Stuart* has some very long speeches of splendid rhetorical quality, not unworthy to be compared with those of Hugo's *Hernani* or *Cromwell*.

In one way, however, Swinburne differs entirely from Hugo, and from his English predecessors: in his almost absolute fidelity to historic fact. As we read *Mary Stuart* it is well for us to remember that here, as in *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*, we have the work of a scholar who is true to the material with which he deals. The trilogy is the result not only of the great love of which Dante speaks, but of the long study as well.

In the life of Mary Stuart in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* Swinburne has given in prose his estimate of his heroine. From this article we shall quote a part of the final paragraph, as the best possible summing up of his estimate of the character of the Queen of Scots as we find her portrayed in the play: —

"Mary Stuart was in many respects the creature of her age, of her creed, and of her station; but the noblest and most noteworthy qualities of her nature were independent of rank, opinion, or time. Even the detractors who defend her conduct on the plea that she was a dastard and a dupe are compelled in the same breath to retract this implied reproach, and to admit, with illogical acclamation and incongruous applause,

that the world never saw more splendid courage at the service of more brilliant intelligence; that a braver if not 'a rarer spirit never did steer humanity.' A kinder or more faithful friend, a deadlier or more dangerous enemy, it would be impossible to dread or to desire. Passion alone could shake the double fortress of her impregnable heart and ever active brain. The passion of love, after very sufficient experience, she apparently and naturally outlived; the passion of hatred and revenge was as inextinguishable in her inmost nature as the emotion of loyalty and gratitude. . . . For her own freedom of will and of way, of passion and of action, she cared much; for her creed she cared something; for her country she cared less than nothing. She would have flung Scotland with England into the hellfire of Spanish Catholicism rather than forego the faintest chance of personal revenge. Her profession of a desire to be instructed in the doctrines of Anglican Protestantism was so transparently a pious fraud as rather to afford confirmation than to arouse suspicion of her fidelity to the teaching of her Church. Elizabeth, so shamefully her inferior in personal loyalty, fidelity, and gratitude, was as clearly her superior on the one all-important point of patriotism. The saving salt of Elizabeth's character, with all its well-nigh incredible mixture of heroism and egotism, meanness and magnificence, was simply this: that overmuch as she loved herself, she did yet love England better. Her best though not her only fine qualities were national and political, the high public virtues of a good public servant: in the private and personal qualities which attract and attach a friend to his friend and a follower to his leader, no man or woman was ever more constant than Mary Queen of Scots."

The play has another clearly conceived character, who is united to the Queen by the closest bonds. This is Mary

Beaton; and she is not merely a character, but in a sense she is the chorus of the play, as we learn through her the inner meaning of the drama. Mary is represented as a baleful woman who ruins those who love her, and this aspect of her character we are all apt enough to perceive. But the slaying of Chastelard brought Mary the Queen under the rule of a greater power than that of Kings or Queens — eternal Justice. Of this principle of Justice, Mary Beaton is the living embodiment, for she is the connecting link between Mary's crime and its punishment. She is not the passive link, but is the actual agent; for she holds the fatal letter which decides the fate of her Queen and mistress. Nor is the play the story of any vulgar revenge. Mary Beaton is impelled by a love which has become a sublime passion. This sense of a watchful and over-ruling Justice is ever present in the play, giving to it its essential unity; and the life and the death of Mary Stuart become in Swinburne's hands something more than facts of history: they are brought into the moral realm of tragedy where ideal Justice sits enthroned and decrees that she must die not merely because she has conspired against the great Queen Elizabeth, but rather because she has compassed the death of the obscure courtier-poet Chastelard.

> "'The bitter tongue through bitter speech shall rue,
> Let bloody stroke for bloody stroke be law,
> The doer must suffer.' 'Tis the world-old saw."

Here we have the constant theme of Greek tragedy, and it is in the insistence upon this principle in its simplest form that Swinburne most clearly shows his kinship to Æschylus and Sophocles. It is by reason of this too that the *Mary Stuart* trilogy, though romantic in form, is one in spirit with his own Greek plays, *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus*.

ATALANTA IN CALYDON

A TRAGEDY

Τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν · κατθανὼν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ
Γῆ καὶ σκιά · τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει.

EUR. *Fr. Mel.* 20 (537).

TO THE MEMORY

OF

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I NOW DEDICATE WITH EQUAL AFFECTION, REVERENCE, AND REGRET, A POEM INSCRIBED TO HIM WHILE YET ALIVE IN WORDS WHICH ARE NOW RETAINED BECAUSE THEY WERE LAID BEFORE HIM; AND TO WHICH, RATHER THAN CANCEL THEM, I HAVE ADDED SUCH OTHERS AS WERE EVOKED BY THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH: THAT THOUGH LOSING THE PLEASURE I MAY NOT LOSE THE HONOUR OF INSCRIBING IN FRONT OF MY WORK THE HIGHEST OF CONTEMPORARY NAMES.

ᾤχεο δὴ Βορέηθεν ἀπότροπος, ἀλλά σε Νύμφαι
ἤγαγον ἀσπασίαν ἠδύπνοοι καθ' ἅλα,
πληροῦσαι μέλιτος θεόθεν στόμα, μή τι Ποσειδῶν
βλάψῃ, ἐν ὠσὶν ἔχων σὴν μελίγηρυν ὄπα.
τοῖος ἀοιδὸς ἔφυς· ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτι κλαίομεν, οἵ σου
δευόμεθ' οἰχομένου, καί σε ποθοῦμεν ἀεί.
εἶπε δὲ Πιερίδων τις ἀναστρεφθεῖσα πρὸς ἄλλην·
ἦλθεν, ἰδού, πάντων φίλτατος ἦλθε βροτῶν,
στέμματα δρεψάμενος νεοθηλέα χερσὶ γεραιαῖς,
καὶ πολιὸν δάφναις ἀμφεκάλυψε κάρα,
ἠδύ τι Σικελικαῖς ἐπὶ πηκτίσιν, ἠδύ τι χόρδαις,
ᾄσόμενος· πολλὴν γὰρ μετέβαλλε λύραν,
πολλάκι δ' ἐν βήσσαισι καθήμενον εὗρεν Ἀπόλλων,
ἄνθεσι δ' ἔστεψεν, τερπνὰ δ' ἔδωκε λέγειν,
Πᾶνα τ' ἀείμνηστόν τε Πίτυν Κόρυθόν τε δύσεδρον,
ἣν τ' ἐφίλησε θεὰν θνητὸς Ἀμαδρύαδα·
πόντου δ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐκοίμισε Κυμοδάμειαν,
τήν τ' Ἀγαμεμνονίαν παῖδ' ἀπέδωκε πατρί,
πρὸς δ ἱεροὺς Δελφοὺς θεόπληκτον ἔπεμψεν Ὀρέστην,
τειρόμενον στυγεραῖς ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα θεαῖς.

ᾤχεο δὴ καὶ ἄνευθε φίλων καὶ ἄνευθεν ἀοιδῆς,
δρεψόμενος μαλακῆς ἄνθεα Περσεφόνης.
ᾤχεο· κοὐκ ἔτ' ἔσει, κοὐκ αὖ ποτέ σοι παρεδοῦμαι
ἀζόμενος, χειρῶν χερσὶ θιγὼν ὁσίαις·
νῦν δ' αὖ μνησάμενον γλυκύπικρος ὑπήλυθεν αἰδὼς,
οἷα τυχὼν οἴου πρὸς σέθεν οἷος ἔχω·
οὔποτε σοῖς, γέρον, ὄμμα φίλοις φίλον ὄμμασι τέρψω,
σῆς, γέρον, ἀψάμενος, φίλτατε, δεξιτερᾶς.
ἦ ψαφαρὰ κόνις, ἦ ψαφαρὸς βιός ἐστι· τί τούτων
μεῖον ἐφημερίων; οὐ κόνις ἀλλὰ βίος.
ἀλλά μοι ἠδύτερός γε πέλεις πολὺ τῶν ἔτ' ἐόντων,
ἔπλεο γάρ· σοὶ μὴν ταῦτα θανόντι φέρω,
παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κῆρος ἐτήτυμα· μηδ' ἀποτρεφθῇς,
πρὸς δὲ βαλὼν ἔτι νῦν ἤσυχον ὄμμα δέχου.
οὐ γὰρ ἔχω, μέγα δή τι θέλων, σέθεν ἄξια δοῦναι,
θαπτομένου περ ἀπών· οὐ γὰρ ἔνεστιν ἔμοι·
οὐδὲ μελικρήτου παρέχειν γάνος· εἰ γὰρ ἐνείη
καί σε χεροῖν ψαύσαι καί σέ ποτ' αὖθις ἰδεῖν,
δάκρυσί τε σπονδαῖς τε κάρα φίλον ἀμφιπολεύειν
ὀφθαλμούς θ' ἱεροὺς σοὺς ἱερόν τε δέμας.
εἶθ' ὄφελον· μάλα γὰρ τάδ' ἂν ἀμπαύσειε μερίμνης·
νῦν δὲ πρόσωθεν ἄνευ σήματος οἶκτον ἄγω·
οὐδ' ἐπιτυμβίδιον θρηνῶ μέλος, ἀλλ' ἀπαμυνθεὶς,
ἀλλ ἀπάνευθεν ἔχων ἀμφιδακρυτὰ πάθη.
ἀλλὰ σὺ χαῖρε θανὼν, καὶ ἔχων γέρας ἴσθι πρὸς ἀνδρῶν
πρός τε θεῶν, ἐνέροις εἴ τις ἔπεστι θεός.
χαῖρε γέρον, φίλε χαῖρε πατὲρ, πολὺ φέρτατ' ἀοιδῶν
ὧν ἴδομεν, πολὺ δὴ φέρτατ' ἀεισομένων·
χαῖρε, καὶ ὄλβον ἔχοις, οἷόν γε θανόντες ἔχουσιν,
ἠσυχίαν ἔχθρας καὶ φιλότητος ἄτερ.

σήματος οἰχομένου σοι μνήματ' ἐς ὕστερον ἔσται,
σοί τε φίλη μνήμη μνήματος οἰχομένου·
ὃν Χάριτες κλαίουσι θεαί, κλαίει δ' Ἀφροδίτη
καλλιχόροις Μουσῶν τερψαμένη στεφάνοις.
οὐ γὰρ ἄπαξ ἱερούς ποτε γῆρας ἔτριψεν ἀοιδοῦς·
τήνδε τὸ σὸν φαίνει μνῆμα τόδ' ἀγλαΐαν.
ἦ φίλος ἦς μακάρεσσι βροτὸς, σοὶ δ' εἴ τινι Νύμφαι
δῶρα ποθεινὰ νέμειν, ὕστατα δῶρ', ἔδοσαν.
τὰς νῦν χάλκεος ὕπνος ἔβη καὶ ἀνήνεμος αἰὼν,
καὶ συνθαπτομέναι μοῖραν ἔχουσι μίαν.
εὕδεις καὶ σὺ, καλὸν καὶ ἀγάκλυτον ἐν χθονὶ κοίλῃ
ὕπνον ἐφικόμενος, σῆς ἀπόνοσφι πάτρας,
τῆλε παρὰ ξανθοῦ Τυρσηνικὸν οἶδμα καθεύδεις
νάματος, ἡ δ' ἔτι σή μαῖά σε γαῖα ποθεῖ,
ἀλλ ἀπέχεις, καὶ πρόσθε φιλόπτολις ὥν περ ἀπεῖπας·
εὕδε· μάκαρ δ' ἡμῖν οὐδ ἀμέγαρτος ἔσει.
βαιὸς ἐπιχθονίων γε χρόνος καὶ μοῖρα κρατήσει,
τοὺς δέ ποτ' εὐφροσύνη τοὺς δέ ποτ' ἄλγος ἔχει·
πολλάκι δ' ἢ βλάπτει φάος ἢ σκότος ἀμφικαλύπτει
μυρομένους, δάκνει δ' ὕπνος ἐγρηγορόταs·
οὐδ' ἔθ' ὅτ' ἐν τύμβοισι κατέδραθεν ὄμμα θανόντων
ἢ σκότος ἤ τι φάος δήξεται ἠελίου·
οὐδ' ὄναρ ἐννύχιον καὶ ἐνύπνιον οὐδ ὕπαρ ἔσται
ἤ ποτε τερπομένοις ἤ ποτ' ὀδυρομένοις·
ἀλλ' ἕνα πάντες ἀεὶ θᾶκον συνέχουσι καὶ ἕδραν
ἀντὶ βροτῆς ἄβροτον, κάλλιμον ἀντι κακῆς.

THE ARGUMENT

ALTHÆA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreamed that she brought forth a brand burning; and upon his birth came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these; that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed: wherefore his mother plucked it forth and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living; and when the tribes of the north and west made war upon Ætolia, he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Œneus king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had fogotten to honour, was yet more wroth because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar which slew many and wasted all their increase, but him could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta daughter of Iasius the Arcadian, a virgin; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favoured the maiden greatly; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamoured of her; but the brethren of Althæa his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as misliked that she only should

bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labour, laid wait for her to take away her spoil; but Meleager fought against them and slew them: whom when Althæa their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

PERSONS

CHIEF HUNTSMAN.

CHORUS.

ALTHÆA.

MELEAGER.

ŒNEUS.

ATALANTA.

TOXEUS.

PLEXIPPUS.

HERALD.

MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER.

ἴστω δ' ὅστις οὐχ ὑπόπτερος
φροντίσιν δαείς,
τὰν ἁ παιδολύμας τάλαινα Θεστιὰς μήσατο
πυρδᾳ̃ τινα πρόνοιαν,
καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν
δαλὸν ἥλικ', ἐπεὶ μολὼν
ματρόθεν κελάδησε;
σύμμετρόν τε διαὶ βίου
μοιρόκραντον ἐς ἆμαρ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 602–612.

ATALANTA IN CALYDON

CHIEF HUNTSMAN

MAIDEN, and mistress of the months and stars
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,
Being treble in thy divided deity,
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep;
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,
But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam
Hidden and shown in heaven; for I all night
Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee; nor shall man
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears;
But for the end, that lies unreached as yet
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.
O fair-faced sun killing the stars and dews
And dreams and desolation of the night!
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,
Shot through and through with arrows; let thine hair
Lighten as flame above that flameless shell

Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world
And thy lips kindle with swift beams; let earth
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs
And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow;
And all the winds about thee with their wings,
And fountain-heads of all the watered world;
Each horn of Acheloüs, and the green
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.
For in fair time thou comest; come also thou,
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done
And bloodless altars without wine or fire.
Him now consume thou; for thy sacrifice
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,
Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænalus
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armèd king,
Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,
From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus
Won from the roaring river and labouring sea
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled

And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,
These virgins with the lightening of the day
Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,
Clean offering, and chaste hymns; but me the time
Divides from these things; whom do thou not less
Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

CHORUS

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
  The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
  With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
  The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
  Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
  With a clamour of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
  Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
  Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,

Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

ALTHÆA

What do ye singing? what is this ye sing?

CHORUS

Flowers bring we, and pure lips that please the gods,
And raiment meet for service: lest the day
Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

ALTHÆA

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,
Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep;
Will ye pray back the night with any prayers?
And though the spring put back a little while
Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,
And the iron time of cursing, yet I know
Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm
Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.
I marvel what men do with prayers awake
Who dream and die with dreaming; any god,
Yea the least god of all things called divine,
Is more than sleep and waking; yet we say,
Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.

For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams
Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,
What shall this man do waking? By the gods,
He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,
Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

CHORUS

Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart?
For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

ALTHÆA

Look, ye say well, and know not what ye say;
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,
And all my dreams to stuff that kindles it.

CHORUS

Yet one doth well being patient of the gods.

ALTHÆA

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague.

CHORUS

But when time spreads find out some herb for it.

ALTHÆA

And with their healing herbs infect our blood.

CHORUS

What ails thee to be jealous of their ways?

ALTHÆA

What if they give us poisonous drinks for wine?

CHORUS

They have their will; much talking mends it not.

ALTHÆA

And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer?

CHORUS

Have they not given life, and the end of life?

ALTHÆA

Lo, where they heal, they help not; thus they do,
They mock us with a little piteousness,
And we say prayers and weep; but at the last,
Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.

CHORUS

Small praise man gets dispraising the high gods:
What have they done that thou dishonourest them?

ALTHÆA

First Artemis for all this harried land
I praise not, and for wasting of the boar
That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet
Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn
And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown leaves,

Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,
I praise her not; what things are these to praise?

CHORUS

But when the king did sacrifice, and gave
Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,
Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering
Revered he, nor with salt or cloven cake;
Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land; but now
Takes off from us fate and her heavy things.
Which deed of these twain were not good to praise?
For a just deed looks always either way
With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

ALTHÆA

Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these
To hurt us where she healed us; and hath lit
Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind
Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

CHORUS

What storm is this that tightens all our sail?

ALTHÆA

Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

CHORUS

Whence blown, and born under what stormier star?

ALTHÆA

Southward across Euenus from the sea.

CHORUS

Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown wind.

ALTHÆA

Sharp as the north sets when the snows are out.

CHORUS

Nay, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

ALTHÆA

I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea
Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire,
Or snows on the extreme hills, or iron land
Where no spring is; I would she had sought therein
And found, or ever love had found her here.

CHORUS

She is holier than all holy days or things,
The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire;
Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled
With higher thoughts than heaven; a maiden clean,
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword; and man
She loves not; what should one such do with love?

ALTHÆA

Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,
But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed; for oft
I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,
And am not moved; and my son chiding them,
And these things nowise move me, but I know
Foolish and wise men must be to the end,
And feed myself with patience; but this most,
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears
Flower-wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,
Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.
These things are in my presage, and myself
Am part of them and know not; but in dreams
The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates
Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,
And burn me blind, and disilluminate
My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul
Darken with vision; seeing I see not, hear
And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes
Stain many tender broideries in the bed
Drawn up about my face that I may weep
And the king wake not; and my brows and lips
Tremble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames
That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat
Kindled from under; and my tears fill my breast
And speck the fair dyed pillows round the king

With barren showers and salter than the sea,
Such dreams divide me dreaming; for long since
I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung
Fire and a firebrand; this was ere my son,
Meleager, a goodly flower in fields of fight,
Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed
Childlike; but yet he was not; and in time
I bare him, and my heart was great; for yet
So royally was never strong man born,
Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing
As this my son was: such a birth God sent
And such a grace to bear it. Then came in
Three weaving women, and span each a thread,
Saying This for strength and That for luck, and one
Saying Till the brand upon the hearth burn down
So long shall this man see good days and live.
And I with gathered raiment from the bed
Sprang, and drew forth the brand, and cast on it
Water, and trod the flame bare-foot, and crushed
With naked hand spark beaten out of spark
And blew against and quenched it; for I said,
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,
And we find favour a little in their sight,
A little, and more we miss of, and much time
Foils us; howbeit they have pitied me, O Son,
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing
Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,
And covered under arms and hair, and wept,
And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed;
So light a thing was this man, grown so great
Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun

Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear
The laughter of little bells along the brace
Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,
High up, the cloven shadow of either plume
Divide the bright light of the brass, and make
His helmet as a windy and wintering moon
Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when ships
Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars
Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death;
Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,
Murmuring; but those grey women with bound hair
Who fright the gods frighted not him; he laughed
Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul
Distaff and thread, intangible; but they
Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart
Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.
But now I know not if to left or right
The gods have drawn us hither; for again
I dreamt, and saw the black brand burst on fire
As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame
Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips
Blew the charred ash into my breast; and Love
Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.
This I have also at heart; that not for me,
Not for me only or son of mine, O girls,
The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,
Heart's love and heart's division; but for all
There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.
And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,

And there is no light after, and no storm,
But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.
In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods
Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,
Eurythemis my mother, who beheld
With eyes alive and spake with lips of these
As one on earth disfleshed and disallied
From breath or blood corruptible ; such gifts
Time gave her, and an equal soul to these
And equal face to all things ; thus she said.
But whatsoever intolerable or glad
The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence
Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,
Toward mine and me sufficient ; and what chance
The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,
That shall we take, and that much bear withal.
And now, before these gather to the hunt,
I will go arm my son and bring him forth,
Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.

CHORUS

Before the beginning of years
  There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears ;
  Grief, with a glass that ran ;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;
  Summer, with flowers that fell ;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
  And madness risen from hell ;
Strength without hands to smite ;
  Love that endures for a breath :

Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the labouring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labour and thought,
A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;

With his lips he travaileth ;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;
Sows, and he shall not reap ;
His life is a watch or a vision,
Between a sleep and a sleep.

MELEAGER

O sweet new heaven and air without a star,
Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men
With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.
Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,
With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks ;
That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds
May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

ALTHÆA

Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee speed ;
But the gods hear men's hands before their lips,
And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice
Light of things done and noise of labouring men.
But thou, being armed and perfect for the deed,
Abide ; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,
The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,
Bound to root out the tuskèd plague, and leave
Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

MELEAGER

For the whole city and all the low-lying land
Flames, and the soft air sounds with them that come ;
The gods give all these fruit of all their works.

ALTHÆA

Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say
Whom there thou knowest; for sharp mixed shadow and wind
Blown up between the morning and the mist,
With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,
And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,
And dust divided by hard light, and spears
That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,
Smite upon mine ; so fiery their blind edge
Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

MELEAGER

The first, for many I know not, being far off,
Peleus the Larissæan, couched with whom
Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,
Fair as fled foam, a goddess ; and their son
Most swift and splendid of men's children born,
Most like a god, full of the future fame.

ALTHÆA

Who are these shining like one sundered star ?

MELEAGER

Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

ALTHÆA

O sweetest kin to me in all the world,
O twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads
Like kindled lights in untempestuous heaven,
Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,

With what glad heart and kindliness of soul,
Even to the staining of both eyes with tears
And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,
A great way off I greet you, and rejoice
Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.
Far off ye come, and least in years of these,
But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

MELEAGER

Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,
And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock
Nigh Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)
Even such I saw their sisters ; one swan-white,
The little Helen, and less fair than she
Fair Clytæmnestra, grave as pasturing fawns
Who feed and fear some arrow ; but at whiles,
As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,
She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then
Weeps ; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,
And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks nought,
But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her,
Laughing ; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud
And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

ALTHÆA

Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords,
And tender and temperate honours of the hearth,
Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.
But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold,
That flames and beats broad wings against the sun
And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey?

MELEAGER

Know by that sign the reign of Telamon
Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine
On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

ALTHÆA

For like one great of hand he bears himself,
Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,
Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.
But who girt round there roughly follows him?

MELEAGER

Ancæus, great of hand, an iron bulk,
Two-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,
Who drives against the surge of stormy spears
Full-sailed; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,
Chief name next his of all Arcadian men.

ALTHÆA

Praise be with men abroad; chaste lives with us,
Home-keeping days and household reverences.

MELEAGER

Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou
The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,
Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled
Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue;
For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth
Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

ALTHÆA

Speech too bears fruit, being worthy; and air blows down
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences,
And with charmed words and songs have men put out
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

MELEAGER

Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love.

ALTHÆA

Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

MELEAGER

Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

ALTHÆA

How sayest thou these? what god applauds new things?

MELEAGER

Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

ALTHÆA

But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

MELEAGER

Yet is not less himself than his own law.

ALTHÆA

Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

MELEAGER

But what he will remoulds and discreates.

ALTHÆA

Much, but not this, that each thing live its life.

MELEAGER

Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

ALTHÆA

Pride breaks itself, and too much gained is gone.

MELEAGER

Things gained are gone, but great things done endure.

ALTHÆA

Child, if a man serve law through all his life
And with his whole heart worship, him all gods
Praise ; but who loves it only with his lips,
And not in heart and deed desiring it
Hides a perverse will with obsequious words,
Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate
Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off,
And the swift hounds of violent death devour.
Be man at one with equal-minded gods,
So shall he prosper ; not through laws torn up,
Violated rule and a new face of things.
A woman armed makes war upon herself,

Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont
And the sweet common honour that she hath,
Love, and the cry of children, and the hand
Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.
This doth she, being unloved ; whom if one love,
Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars
Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.
For of the one comes poison, and a curse
Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.
But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,
Nor with desire of these things ; for with time
Blind love burns out ; but if one feed it full
Till some discolouring stain dyes all his life,
He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die
The sweet wise death of old men honourable,
Who have lived out all the length of all their years
Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,
And without shame and without fear have wrought
Things memorable, and while their days held out
In sight of all men and the sun's great light
Have gat them glory and given of their own praise
To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,
Home friends and far-off hospitalities,
And filled with gracious and memorial fame
Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas,
Towns populous and many unfooted ways,
And alien lips and native with their own.
But when white age and venerable death
Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,
Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,
Immortal honour is on them, having past
Through splendid life and death desirable

To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,
Lands indiscoverable in the unheard-of west,
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea
Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow
There shows not her white wings and windy feet,
Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,
Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive ;
And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,
Sages and singers fiery from the god,
And such as loved their land and all things good
And, best beloved of best men, liberty,
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,
And whatsoever on earth was honourable
And whosoever of all the ephemeral seed,
Live there a life no liker to the gods
But nearer than their life of terrene days.
Love thou such life and look for such a death.
But from the light and fiery dreams of love
Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,
Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close
Nor song assuage them waking ; and swift death
Crushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,
Treads out the timeless vintage ; whom do thou
Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,
Not without honour ; and it shall bear to thee
Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear,
Few men, but happy ; of whom be thou, O son,
Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,
And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born
And divine deeds and abstinence divine.
So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days
As light and might communicable, and burn

From heaven among the stars above the hours,
And break not as a man breaks nor burn down.
For to whom other of all heroic names
Have the gods given his life in hand as thine?
And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life
To me that bare thee and to all men born
Thankworthy, a praise for ever ; and hast won fame
When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,
And the mad people of windy mountain ways
Laid spears against us like a sea, and all
Ætolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs ;
Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats
Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break
And loosen all their lances, till undone
And man from man they fell ; for ye twain stood
God against god, Ares and Artemis,
And thou the mightier ; wherefore she unleashed
A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome;
For in the greener blossom of thy life
Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time gave
Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,
But with great hand and heart seek praise of men
Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,
Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas,
On channels never sailed in, and by shores
Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the night
Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

CHORUS

Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words
The gods have given this woman ; hear thou these.

MELEAGER

O mother, I am not fain to strive in speech
Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise
Even as they say and full of sacred words.
But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this;
That though I be not subtle of wit as thou
Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and melt
Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,
I too, doing justly and reverencing the gods,
Shall not want wit to see what things be right.
For whom they love and whom reject, being gods,
There is no man but seeth, and in good time
Submits himself, refraining all his heart.
And I too as thou sayest have seen great things;
Seen otherwhere, but chiefly when the sail
First caught between stretched ropes the roaring west,
And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind
First flung round faces of seafaring men
White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,
And the first furrow in virginal green sea
Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,
And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath
Lips close and heart subsides ; and closing, shone
Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved
Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,
Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs
Through waning water and into shallow light,
That watched us ; and when flying the dove was snared
As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped
Clear through the irremeable Symplegades;
And chiefliest when hoar beach and herbless cliff
Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard

Clefts hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing reefs
The lightning of the intolerable wave
Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn
Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp
Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way;
Wild heights untravelled of the wind, and vales
Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white
With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine;
Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing birdwise
Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet
Tread loose the long skirts of a storm; and saw
The whole white Euxine clash together and fall
Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand throats:
Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won
Medea, deadlier than the sea; but there
Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men
I saw not one thing like this one seen here,
Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,
Faultless; whom I that love not, being unlike,
Fear, and give honour, and choose from all the gods.

ŒNEUS

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,
Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,
Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire,
I come to judge between you, but a king
Full of past days and wise from years endured.
Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done:
Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.
For what the hours have given is given, and this
Changeless; howbeit these change, and in good time
Devise new things and good, not one thing still.

Us have they sent now at our need for help
Among men armed a woman, foreign born,
Virgin, not like the natural flower of things
That grows and bears and brings forth fruit and dies;
Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,
Espoused; a glory among unwedded girls,
And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.
These too we honour in honouring her; but thou,
Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes
From amorous touch; nor set toward hers thine heart,
Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

ALTHÆA

O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts; and just,
But the gods love not justice more than fate,
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,
And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,
And bruise the holier as the lying lips.
Enough; for wise words fail me, and my heart
Takes fire and trembles flamewise, O my son,
O child, for thine head's sake; mine eyes wax thick,
Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,
So glorious; and for love of thine own eyes
They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as fire,
And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.
But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,
By thy great heart and these clasped knees, O son,
I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.
For there was never a mother woman-born
Loved her sons better; and never a queen of men
More perfect in her heart toward whom she loved.
For what lies light on many and they forget,

Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,
I forget never; I have seen thee all thine years
A man in arms, strong and a joy to men
Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way
Through a heavy and iron furrow of sundering spears;
But always also a flower of three suns old,
The small one thing that lying drew down my life
To lie with thee and feed thee; a child and weak,
Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.
Who then sought to thee? who gat help? who knew
If thou wert goodly? nay, no man at all.
Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,
Child? or what strange land shone with war through thee?
But fair for me thou wert, O little life,
Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,
More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.
For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam
Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,
O child, my child; and now thou art lordlier grown,
Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,
I charge thee by thy soul and this my breast,
Fear thou the gods and me and thine own heart,
Lest all these turn against thee; for who knows
What wind upon what wave of altering time
Shall speak a storm and blow calamity?
And there is nothing stabile in the world
But the gods break it; yet not less, fair son,
If but one thing be stronger, if one endure,
Surely the bitter and the rooted love
That burns between us, going from me to thee,
Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,
Following strange loves? why wilt thou kill mine heart?

Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall
From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self
Dethroned, dispraised, disseated; and my mind,
That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,
And I am naked of my soul, and stand
Ashamed, as a mean woman; take thou thought:
Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look,
The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,
Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end
Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

MELEAGER

Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy tears,
And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love
Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath;
For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast
And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound
Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.
For there is nothing terribler to men
Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.
But what shall be let be; for us the day
Once only lives a little, and is not found.
Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,
And these lay hold upon us; but thou, God,
Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,
Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt
Help: or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

CHORUS

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly,
O Love;

Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
  Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,
    Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
      And the seed of it laughter and tears,
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
  A bitter flower from the bud,
    Sprung of the sea without root,
      Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
  That is woven of the day on the night,
  The hair of the hours was not white
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
  When a wonder, a world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
  And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
    Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
  A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
    To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,
  And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
    Sweetly divided apart,
  And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
    Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,
  She is fair, she is white like a dove,
    And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth;
  For they knew thee for mother of love,
    And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
  Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the springtime of corn,
  A flower of the foam of the seas?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,
  Aphrodite, a mother of strife;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
    A little respite from tears,
  A little pleasure of life;
For life was not then as thou art,
    But as one that waxeth in years
  Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;
    Earth had no thorn, and desire
No sting, neither death any dart;
  What hadst thou to do amongst these,
    Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
  Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas

As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn?
What ailed thee then to be born?

Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
Storm out of heaven, and dearth
Shaken down from the shining thereof,
Wrecks from afar overseas
And peril of shallow and firth,
And tears that spring and increase
In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
Being girt with desire for a girth,
That thou must come after these,
That thou must lay on him love?

Thou shouldst not so have been born:
But death should have risen with thee,
Mother, and visible fear,
Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn;
The smitten bosom, the knee
Bowed, and in each man's ear
A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,
A tumult of infinite griefs;

And thunder of storm on the sands,
And wailing of wives on the shore;
And under thee newly arisen
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light;
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness, and noises of night;
Clashing of streams in the sea,
Wave against wave as a sword,
Clamour of currents, and foam;
Rains making ruin on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth;
Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare?
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,
But abide with despair and desire
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another,
And breaking of city by city;
The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;

Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest ; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro an evil thing,
Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver ;
Being mixed and made one through desire
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

ATALANTA

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day
Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods
Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,

But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven,
On earth of all maids worshipped — hail, and hear,
And witness with me if not without sign sent,
Not without rule and reverence, I a maid
Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,
Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men
Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts
Drawn ; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,
If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,
Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,
That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung
For a web woven ; and with pure lips salute
Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn
Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers
The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet
The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways
And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.
Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,
Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,
Next Artemis I bid be favourable
And make this day all golden, hers and ours,
Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.
But thou, O well-beloved, of all my days
Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,
To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair
With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.
For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,
For not without law given and clean command,
Across the white straits of the running sea
From Elis even to the Acheloïan horn,
I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods,
Far off my father's house, and left uncheered

Iasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills
And all their green-haired waters, and all woods
Disconsolate, to hear no horn of mine
Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.

MELEAGER

For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,
O holiest Atalanta, no man dares
Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,
And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair
And holy habit of thine eyes, and feet
That make the blown foam neither swift nor white
Though the wind winnow and whirl it ; yet we praise
Gods, found because of thee adorable
And for thy sake praiseworthiest from all men:
Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,
Pure, and a light lit at the hands of gods.

TOXEUS

How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,
Fight, and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words ?
Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.

PLEXIPPUS

Why, if she ride among us for a man,
Sit thou for her and spin ; a man grown girl
Is worth a woman weaponed ; sit thou here.

MELEAGER

Peace, and be wise ; no gods love idle speech.

PLEXIPPUS

Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

MELEAGER

For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

PLEXIPPUS

Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

MELEAGER

Keep thine hands clean ; they have time enough to stain.

PLEXIPPUS

For thine shall rest and wax not red to-day.

MELEAGER

Have all thy will of words ; talk out thine heart.

ALTHÆA

Refrain your lips, O brethren, and my son,
Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them.

TOXEUS

Except she give her blood before the gods,
What profit shall a maid be among men?

PLEXIPPUS

Let her come crowned and stretch her throat for a knife,
Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men

Through her too prosper and through prosperous gods,
But nowise through her living ; shall she live
A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit
For kisses and the honey-making mouth,
And play the shield for strong men and the spear?
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,
And the bride overbear the groom, and men
Gods ; for no less division sunders these ;
Since all things made are seasonable in time,
But if one alter unseasonable are all.
But thou, O Zeus, hear me that I may slay
This beast before thee and no man halve with me
Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,
Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be held
Foolish ; for wise is that thing which endures.

ATALANTA

Men, and the chosen of all this people, and thou,
King, I beseech you a little bear with me.
For if my life be shameful that I live,
Let the gods witness and their wrath ; but these
Cast no such word against me. Thou, O mine,
O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin
Changing the words of women and the works
For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced
Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side,
All couched about one mother's loosening knees,
All holy born, engraffed of Tantalus?
But if toward any of you I am overbold
That take thus much upon me, let him think

How I, for all my forest holiness,
Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,
Pay thus much also; I shall have no man's love
For ever, and no face of children born
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes
For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons
Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks
Burn ; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,
Far off from flowers or any bed of man,
Shall my life be for ever : me the snows
That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills
Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms
And many a wandering wing of noisy nights
That know the thunder and hear the thickening wolves —
Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods
That talk with many winds and gods, the hours
Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,
Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed
And streams that murmur of the mother snow —
Me these allure, and know me ; but no man
Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see
If one of all you these things vex at all.
Would God that any of you had all the praise
And I no manner of memory when I die,
So might I show before her perfect eyes
Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.
But for the rest let all have all they will;
For is it a grief to you that I have part,
Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds
Done by main strength ? yet in my body is throned
As great a heart, and in my spirit, O men,

I have not less of godlike. Evil it were
That one a coward should mix with you, one hand
Fearful, one eye abase itself ; and these
Well might ye hate and well revile, not me.
For not the difference of the several flesh
Being vile or noble or beautiful or base
Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart
Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that feed,
Rise, rest, and are and are not ; and for me,
What should I say ? but by the gods of the world
And this my maiden body, by all oaths
That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,
I am not mighty-minded, nor desire
Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame ;
Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat ; cry out,
Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre,
Sing, mix the wind with clamour, smite and shake
Sonorous timbrels and tumultuous hair,
And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,
For I will none ; but having prayed my prayers
And made thank-offering for prosperities,
I shall go hence and no man see me more.
What thing is this for you to shout me down,
What, for a man to grudge me this my life
As it were envious of all yours, and I
A thief of reputations ? nay, for now,
If there be any highest in heaven, a god
Above all thrones and thunders of the gods
Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,
Judge he between me and all of you, and see
If I transgress at all : but ye, refrain
Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep

Silence, lest by much foam of violent words
And proper poison of your lips ye die.

ŒNEUS

O flower of Tegea, maiden, fleetest foot
And holiest head of women, have good cheer
Of thy good words : but ye, depart with her
In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye
Following his fate ; exalt your hands and hearts,
Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on wound,
And go with gods and with the gods return.

CHORUS

Who hath given man speech ? or who hath set therein
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?
For in the word his life is and his breath,
  And in the word his death,
That madness and the infatuate heart may breed
  From the word's womb the deed
And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,
Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die —
Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,
Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he
Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care
  And mutable as sand,
But death is strong and full of blood and fair
And perdurable and like a lord of land ?
Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see
Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand
  And thy life-days from thee.

For the gods very subtly fashion
  Madness with sadness upon earth :
Not knowing in any wise compassion,
  Nor holding pity of any worth ;
And many things they have given and taken,
  And wrought and ruined many things ;
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,
  And sealed the sea with all her springs;
They have wearied time with heavy burdens
  And vexed the lips of life with breath:
Set men to labour and given them guerdons,
  Death, and great darkness after death:
Put moans into the bridal measure
  And on the bridal wools a stain ;
And circled pain about with pleasure,
  And girdled pleasure about with pain;
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire
For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours ?
  Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven
To bathe the brows of morning ? or like flowers
Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,
  Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven ?
Or rather, O our masters, shall they be
Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
  A great well-head of lamentation
Satiating the sad gods ? or fall and flow
Among the years and seasons to and fro,
  And wash their feet with tribulation
And fill them full with grieving ere they go ?
  Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,

Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold
  But all we smite thereat in vain;
Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,
  But all the floors are paven with our pain.
Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,
With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,
  We labour, and are clad and fed with grief
And filled with days we would not fain behold
And nights we would not hear of ; we wax old,
  All we wax old and wither like a leaf.
We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon ;
  Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,
Black flowers and white, that perish ; and the noon
  As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.
  A little fruit a little while is ours,
    And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one
  Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,
  And stir with soft imperishable breath
  The bubbling bitterness of life and death,
And hold it to our lips and laugh ; but they
Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,
  Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,
The lips that made us and the hands that slay ;
  Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to none,
Change and be subject to the secular sway
  And terrene revolution of the sun.
Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet
  With multitudinous days and nights and tears

And many mixing savours of strange years,
Were no more trodden of them under feet,
Cast out and spilt about their holy places :
That life were given them as a fruit to eat
And death to drink as water ; that the light
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night
Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.
That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,
One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain;
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be
Awhile as all things born with us and we,
And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them ; but one saith
The gods are gracious, praising God ; and one,
When hast thou seen ? or hast thou felt his breath
Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death ?
None hath beheld him, none
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,
Swift without feet and flying without wings,
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
Insatiable, not known of night or day,
The lord of love and loathing and of strife
Who gives a star and takes a sun away ;
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame
And binds the great sea with a little sand;
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;

Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
  Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;
  The supreme evil, God.
Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,
  One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,
And made us transitory and hazardous,
  Light things and slight;
Yet men have praised thee, saying, He hath made man thus,
  And he doeth right.
Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast laid
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,
Live: and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.
Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
  Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;
Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,
  In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.
Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men ;
  Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears ;
Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again;
  With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.
Therefore, because thou art strong, our father, and we
  Feeble ; and thou art against us, and thine hand
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea
  And breaks us at the limits of the land ;
Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,
  And loosed the hours like arrows ; and let fall
Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe
  And wars among us, and one end of all ;
Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet
  Are as a rushing water when the skies

Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat
  And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes ;
Because thou art over all who are over us ;
  Because thy name is life and our name death ;
Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,
  And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth ;
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
  Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,
    At least we witness of thee ere we die
That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;
  That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,
    That all men even as I,
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.

  But ye, keep ye on earth
  Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth ;
  And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
  And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
  And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
For words divide and rend ;
But silence is most noble till the end.

ALTHÆA

I heard within the house a cry of news
And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn
Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun
And next our eyes unrisen ; for unaware

Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet
And through the windy pillared corridor
Light sharper than the frequent flames of day
That daily fill it from the fiery dawn ;
Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,
And dust and hurrying horsemen ; lo their chief,
That rode with Œneus rein by rein, returned.
What cheer, O herald of my lord the king?

HERALD

Lady, good cheer and great ; the boar is slain.

CHORUS

Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

ALTHÆA

Good news and brief ; but by whose happier hand?

HERALD

A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

ALTHÆA

Well fare the spear that severed him and life.

HERALD

Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

ALTHÆA

Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

HERALD

At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

ALTHÆA

Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the spoil?

HERALD

Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, O queen.

ALTHÆA

Speak thou their chance ; but some bring flowers and crown
These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,
Fetch sacrifice and slay ; for heaven is good.

HERALD

Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin
West of that narrowing range of warrior hills
Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son
Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,
And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,
Royally ranked ; Laertes island-born,
The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,
And Cepheus and Ancæus, mightiest thewed,
Arcadians ; next, and evil-eyed of these,
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds
Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow
Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye ;
But from her white braced shoulder the plumed shafts
Rang, and the bow shone from her side; next her
Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes

Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,
A glory among men meaner; Iphicles,
And following him that slew the biform bull
Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,
And, bride-bound to the gods, Æacides.
Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born
The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,
Amphiaraus; and a four-fold strength,
Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons.
And recent from the roar of foreign foam
Jason, and Dryas twin-begot with war,
A blossom of bright battle, sword and man
Shining; and Idas, and the keenest eye
Of Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,
And Hippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.
These having halted bade blow horns, and rode
Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy streams,
Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines,
And where the dew is thickest under oaks,
This way and that; but questing up and down
They saw no trail nor scented; and one said,
Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,
And we will flay thy boarskin with male hands;
But saying, he ceased and said not that he would
Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh
Shook with a thousand reeds untunable,
And in their moist and multitudinous flower
Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,
The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.
And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise
Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart,
And missed; for much desire divided him,

Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,
That his hand failed, though fervent; and the shaft,
Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem
Shook, and stuck fast; then all abode save one,
The Arcadian Atalanta; from her side
Sprang her hounds, labouring at the leash, and slipped,
And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet; but she
Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,
Goddess, drew bow and loosed; the sudden string
Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air
Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds
Moved as a wave which the wind moves no more.
But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime
His tense flank trembling round the barbèd wound,
Hateful; and fiery with invasive eyes
And bristling with intolerable hair
Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers and white
Reddened and broke all round them where they came.
And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote
Hyleus; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,
Shot; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew
His comrade born and loving countryman,
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less
Poised a like arrow; and bright blood brake afoam,
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,
Amphiaraus; for his sacred shaft
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,

Now bloodier from one slain; but he so galled
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea;
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight
With ruin of walls and all its archery,
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men;
So through crushed branches and the reddening brake
Clamoured and crashed the fervour of his feet,
And trampled, springing sideways from the tusk,
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength,
Ancæus; and as flakes of weak-winged snow
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,
And smote not; but Meleager, but thy son,
Right in the wild way of the coming curse
Rock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,
Clear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening limb —
With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat,
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god, —
Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and smote,
And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone,
Deep in; and deeply smitten, and to death,
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life.

And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,
Zeus and all gods, but chiefliest Artemis,
Seeing; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,
Strip and stretch out the splendour of the spoil;
And hot and horrid from the work all these
Sat, and drew breath and drank and made great cheer
And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the reed,
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,
Narcissus, and the low-lying melilote,
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds
Blossom and burn; and fire of yellower flowers
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot;
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,
And many a well-spring overwatched of these.
There now they rest; but me the king bade bear
Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.
Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks,
For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

ALTHÆA

Laud ye the gods; for this they have given is good,
And what shall be they hide until their time.
Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,
And either well; but let all sad things be,
Till all have made before the prosperous gods
Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.
Look fair, O gods, and favourable; for we
Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,
Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

HERALD

Thou hast prayed well; for whoso fears not these,
But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,
Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

CHORUS

O that I now, I too were
By deep wells and water-floods,
Streams of ancient hills, and where
All the wan green places bear
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,
Or such darkest ivy-buds
As divide thy yellow hair,
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare
Snow-soft shoulders of a god;
There the year is sweet, and there
Earth is full of secret springs,
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,
Those that marry dawn and noon,
There are sunless, there look pale
In dim leaves and hidden air,
Pale as grass or latter flowers
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings
Full of dew beneath the moon,
And all day the nightingale
Sleeps, and all night sings;
There in cold remote recesses
That nor alien eyes assail,
Feet, nor imminence of wings,

Nor a wind nor any tune,
Thou, O queen and holiest,
Flower the whitest of all things,
With reluctant lengthening tresses
And with sudden splendid breast
Save of maidens unbeholden,
There are wont to enter, there
Thy divine swift limbs and golden
Maiden growth of unbound hair,
Bathed in waters white,
Shine, and many a maid's by thee
In moist woodland or the hilly
Flowerless brakes where wells abound
Out of all men's sight;
Or in lower pools that see
All their marges clothed all round
With the innumerable lily,
Whence the golden-girdled bee
Flits through flowering rush to fret
White or duskier violet,
Fair as those that in far years
With their buds left luminous
And their little leaves made wet,
From the warmer dew of tears,
Mother's tears in extreme need,
Hid the limbs of Iamus,
Of thy brother's seed;
For his heart was piteous
Toward him, even as thine heart now
Pitiful toward us;
Thine, O goddess, turning hither
A benignant blameless brow;

Seeing enough of evil done
And lives withered as leaves wither
In the blasting of the sun;
Seeing enough of hunters dead,
Ruin enough of all our year,
Herds and harvests slain and shed,
Herdsmen stricken many an one,
Fruits and flocks consumed together,
And great length of deadly days.
Yet with reverent lips and fear
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise
For this lightening of clear weather
And prosperities begun.
For not seldom, when all air
As bright water without breath
Shines, and when men fear not, fate
Without thunder unaware
Breaks, and brings down death.
Joy with grief ye great gods give,
Good with bad, and overbear
All the pride of us that live,
All the high estate,
As ye long since overbore,
As in old time long before,
Many a strong man and a great,
All that were.
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,
Having heed of all our prayer,
Taking note of all our sighs;
We beseech thee by thy light,
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,
And the kingdom of the night,

Be thou favourable and fair;
By thine arrows and thy might
And Orion overthrown;
By the maiden thy delight,
By the indissoluble zone
And the sacred hair.

MESSENGER

Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your song,
Bow down, cry, wail for pity; is this a time
For singing? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,
Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

CHORUS

What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy words?
What snake's tongue in thy lips? what fire in the eyes?

MESSENGER

Bring me before the queen and I will speak.

CHORUS

Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering made.

MESSENGER

A barren offering for a bitter gift.

ALTHÆA

What are these borne on branches, and the face
Covered? no mean men living, but now slain
Such honour have they, if any dwell with death.

MESSENGER

Queen, thy twain brethren and thy mother's sons.

ALTHÆA

Lay down your dead till I behold their blood
If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

MESSENGER

Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no more.

ALTHÆA

O brethren, O my father's sons, of me
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you
But that I know you not uncomforted,
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,
For my son surely hath avenged you dead.

MESSENGER

Nay, should thine own seed slay himself, O queen?

ALTHÆA

Thy double word brings forth a double death.

MESSENGER

Know this then singly, by one hand they fell.

ALTHÆA

What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous mouth?

MESSENGER

Slain by thy son's hand ; is that saying so hard?

ALTHÆA

Our time is come upon us : it is here.

CHORUS

O miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand.

ALTHÆA

Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?

CHORUS

A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

ALTHÆA

Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

CHORUS

The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

ALTHÆA

My dreams are fallen upon me ; burn thou too.

CHORUS

Not without God are visions born and die.

ALTHÆA

The gods are many about me ; I am one.

CHORUS

She groaned as men wrestling with heavier gods.

ALTHÆA

They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.

CHORUS

Or one labouring in travail of strange births.

ALTHÆA

They are strong, they are strong ; I am broken, and these prevail.

CHORUS

The god is great against her ; she will die.

ALTHÆA

Yea, but not now ; for my heart too is great.
I would I were not here in sight of the sun.
But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

MESSENGER

O queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,
A little word may hold so great mischance.
For in division of the sanguine spoil
These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up
The boar's head and the horror of the hide
That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,
Hallowed ; and some drew toward them ; but thy son
With great hands grasping all that weight of hair
Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed

At female feet, saying This thy spoil not mine,
Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,
And all this praise God gives thee : she thereat
Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night
The sky sees laugh and redden and divide
Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,
Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,
Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamp-lit hours,
And maiden undulation of clear hair
Colour the clouds ; so laughed she from pure heart,
Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,
And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,
Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,
A faint grave laugh ; and all they held their peace,
And she passed by them. Then one cried Lo now,
Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,
Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl?
And all they rode against her violently
And cast the fresh crown from her hair, and now
They had rent her spoil away, dishonouring her,
Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,
Bore on them, broke them, and as fire cleaves wood
So clove and drove them, smitten in twain ; but she
Smote not nor heaved up hand ; and this man first,
Plexippus, crying out This for love's sake, sweet,
Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening
Pierced his cheek through ; then Toxeus made for him,
Dumb, but his spear spake ; vain and violent words,
Fruitless; for him too stricken through both sides
The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam
Blanched thy son's face, his slayer; and these being slain,
None moved nor spake ; but Œneus bade bear hence

These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,
Foolish ; for these would baffle fate, and fell.
And they passed on, and all men honoured her,
Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.

ALTHÆA

What say you, women? is all this not well done?

CHORUS

No man doth well but God hath part in him.

ALTHÆA

But no part here ; for these my brethren born
Ye have no part in, these ye know not of
As I that was their sister, a sacrifice
Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these ;
For this man dead walked with me, child by child,
And made a weak staff for my feebler feet
With his own tender wrist and hand, and held
And led me softly and shewed me gold and steel
And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown
And all things fair ; and threw light spears, and brought
Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust
Tame heads against my little maiden breasts
And please me with great eyes ; and those days went
And these are bitter and I a barren queen
And sister miserable, a grievous thing
And mother of many curses ; and she too,
My sister Leda, sitting overseas
With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,
Shall curse me, saying A sorrow and not a son,

Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,
A brand consuming thine own soul and me.
But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,
For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire
As no king hath ; and flame that once burnt down
Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine
Refresh again ; much costlier than fine gold,
And more than many lives of wandering men.

CHORUS

O queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,
Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

ALTHÆA

Who shall get brothers for me while I live?
Who bear them? who bring forth in lieu of these?
Are not our fathers and our brethren one,
And no man like them? are not mine here slain?
Have we not hung together, he and I,
Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,
With mother-milk for honey? and this man too,
Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,
Hath he not seen us, later born than he,
Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love?
There were no sons then in the world, nor spears,
Nor deadly births of women ; but the gods
Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.
I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth
No swords to vex the world ; for these that spake
Sweet words long since and loved me will not speak
Nor love nor look upon me ; and all my life

I shall not hear nor see them living men.
But I too living, how shall I now live?
What life shall this be with my son, to know
What hath been and desire what will not be,
Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips,
And kill mine own heart with remembering them,
And with those eyes that see their slayer alive
Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand?
How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear
False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths
And footless sound of perished feet, and then
Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds
Whine masterless in miserable sleep,
And see their boar-spears and their beds and seats
And all the gear and housings of their lives
And not the men? shall hounds and horses mourn,
Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,
Famish and fail at heart for their dear lords,
And I not heed at all? and those blind things
Fall off from life for love's sake, and I live?
Surely some death is better than some life,
Better one death for him and these and me.
For if the gods had slain them it may be
I had endured it; if they had fallen by war
Or by the nets and knives of privy death
And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too
I had set my soul to suffer; or this hunt,
Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth
Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken; for all deaths
Or honourable or with facile feet avenged
And hands of swift gods following, all save this,
Are bearable; but not for their sweet land

Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these
Dead; for I had not then shed all mine heart
Out at mine eyes: then either with good speed,
Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,
Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs
Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen
Their praise outflame their ashes: for all men,
All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips
Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes
Tears; and their death had been a deathless life;
But now, by no man hired nor alien sword,
By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,
After much peril, friendless among friends,
By hateful hands they loved; and how shall mine
Touch these returning red and not from war,
These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,
Dead men my brethren? how shall these wash off
No festal stains of undelightful wine,
How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,
Holding mine hand? or how shall I say, son,
That am no sister? but by night and day
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think
Things hate-worthy? not live with shamefast eyes,
Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke
Convicted, and without a word reviled
Each of another? and I shall let thee live
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live
No man shall praise for ever? these shall lie
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee?
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart

Desired them, but was then well satisfied,
That now is as men hungered; and these dead
I shall want always to the day I die.
For all things else and all men may renew;
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,
But never a brother or sister any more.

CHORUS

Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,
Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains
Life and the blood of life and all thy fruit,
Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and eats,
Treads wine and drinks, thyself, a sect of thee;
And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint?
Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst?
This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,
That thou cleave to him; and he shall honour thee,
Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,
Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

ALTHÆA

But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,
Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart
Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,
But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast,
Hath taken away to slay them: yea, and she,
She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,
Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,
Adorable, detestable — even she
Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,
Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me

Made miserable above all miseries made,
A grief among all women in the world,
A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

CHORUS

Strengthen thy spirit; is this not also a god,
Chance, and the wheel of all necessities?
Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,
Whom lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

ALTHÆA

My spirit is strong against itself, and I
For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul
That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,
And life, and this inexpiable impotence.
Weak am I, weak and shameful; my breath drawn
Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.
What shall atone? what heal me? what bring back
Strength to the foot, light to the face? what herb
Assuage me? what restore me? what release?
What strange thing eaten or drunken, O great gods,
Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,
Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts?
For these ye show us; and we less than these
Have not wherewith to live as all these things
Which all their lives fare after their own kind
As who doth well rejoicing; but we ill,
Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails,
Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,
And hands we lack, and wit; and all our days
Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.

For madness have ye given us and not health,
And sins whereof we know not; and for these
Death, and sudden destruction unaware.
What shall we say now? what thing comes of us?

CHORUS

Alas, for all this all men undergo.

ALTHÆA

Wherefore I will not that these twain, O gods,
Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things,
Abominable, a loathing; but though dead
Shall they have honour and such funereal flame
As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face
And blinds their eyes who hate them: lest men say,
"Lo how they lie, and living had great kin,
And none of these hath pity of them, and none
Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,
None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,
Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them:"
And in the dark this grieve Eurythemis,
Hearing how these her sons come down to her
Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men,
And had a queen their sister. That were shame
Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all
I know not; seeing the love of my born son,
A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal;
This love is deep, and natural to man's blood,

And ineffaceable with many tears.
Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die,
Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,
My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,
Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun;
Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,
Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen,
Righteous; and though mine own fire burn me too,
She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.
But all the gods will, all they do, and we
Not all we would, yet somewhat; and one choice
We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

CHORUS

Terrible words she communes with, and turns
Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,
And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.

ALTHÆA

For the unjust also dieth, and him all men
Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,
And seeth his own dishonour intolerable.
But I being just, doing right upon myself,
Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me.
For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,
What none compelled me doing; thus these things fare.
Ah, ah, that such things should so fare; ah me,
That I am found to do them and endure,
Chosen and constrained to choose, and bear myself
Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart
Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,

A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.
Ah, ah, for me too as for these; alas,
For that is done that shall be, and mine hand
Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,
That shall see never nor touch anything
Save blood unstanched and fire unquenchable.

CHORUS

What wilt thou do? what ails thee? for the house
Shakes ruinously; wilt thou bring fire for it?

ALTHÆA

Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,
There; and blood drips from hand and thread, and stains
Threshold and raiment and me passing in
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.

CHORUS

Alas that time is stronger than strong men,
Fate than all gods: and these are fallen on us.

ALTHÆA

A little since and I was glad; and now
I never shall be glad or sad again.

CHORUS

Between two joys a grief grows unaware.

ALTHÆA

A little while and I shall laugh; and then
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

CHORUS

What shall be said? for words are thorns to grief.
Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

ALTHÆA

Fear died when these were slain; and I am as dead,
And fear is of the living; these fear none.

CHORUS

Have pity upon all people for their sake.

ALTHÆA

It is done now; shall I put back my day?

CHORUS

An end is come, an end; this is of God.

ALTHÆA

I am fire, and burn myself; keep clear of fire.

CHORUS

The house is broken, is broken; it shall not stand.

ALTHÆA

Woe, woe for him that breaketh; and a rod
Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

CHORUS

Not as with sundering of the earth
Nor as with cleaving of the sea

Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth
  Nor flying dreams of death to be
Nor loosening of the large world's girth
And quickening of the body of night,
  And sound of thunder in men's ears
And fire of lightning in men's sight,
  Fate, mother of desires and fears,
  Bore unto men the law of tears;
But sudden, an unfathered flame,
  And broken out of night, she shone,
She, without body, without name,
  In days forgotten and foregone;
And heaven rang round her as she came
Like smitten cymbals and lay bare;
  Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,
The blue sad fields and folds of air,
  The life that breathes, the life that grows,
  All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,
Even all these knew her: for she is great;
  The daughter of doom, the mother of death,
The sister of sorrow; a lifelong weight
  That no man's finger lighteneth,
Nor any god can lighten fate;
A landmark seen across the way
  Where one race treads as the other trod;
An evil sceptre, an evil stay,
  Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,
  The bitter jealousy of God.
  For death is deep as the sea,
    And fate as the waves thereof.
  Shall the waves take pity on thee
    Or the southwind offer thee love?

Wilt thou take the night for thy day
Or the darkness for light on thy way,
Till thou say in thine heart Enough?
Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise;
The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light in thine eyes.
The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound in thine ears;
Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine eyelids with tears.
Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold, and with silver thy feet?
Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made thy mouth sweet?
Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved thee shall hate;
Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain;
And the veil of thine head shall be grief; and the crown shall be pain.

ALTHÆA

Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way
Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,
Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,
Ye laughers for a little; lo mine eyes
That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth
That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,
Yet fate is ours a breathing-space; yea, mine,
Fate is made mine for ever; he is my son,
My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,
Give place unto me; I am as any of you,
To give life and to take life. Thou, old earth,
That hast made man and unmade; thou whose mouth

Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;
Behold me with what lips upon what food
I feed and fill my body; even with flesh
Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit
I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame
I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

CHORUS

Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with?

ALTHÆA

Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

CHORUS

For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

ALTHÆA

A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

CHORUS

And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

ALTHÆA

Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

CHORUS

I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes.

ALTHÆA

Neither with love they tremble nor for fear.

CHORUS

And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

ALTHÆA

Not as the bride's mouth when man kisses it.

CHORUS

Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast done?

ALTHÆA

Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

CHORUS

I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

ALTHÆA

Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.

CHORUS

Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

ALTHÆA

Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.

CHORUS

And a long brand that blackens: and white dust.

ALTHÆA

O children, what is this ye see? your eyes
Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.
That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,
My travail, and the year's weight of my womb,
Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands
And of mine hands extinguished; this is he.

CHORUS

O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?

ALTHÆA

I did this and I say this and I die.

CHORUS

Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,
And in thy mouth has death set up his house.

ALTHÆA

O death, a little, a little while, sweet death,
Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

CHORUS

She reels as any reed under the wind,
And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

ALTHÆA

Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.
I that did this will weep not nor cry out,
Cry ye and weep: I will not call on gods,
Call ye on them; I will not pity man,
Shew ye your pity. I know not if I live;
Save that I feel the fire upon my face
And on my cheek the burning of a brand.
Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip
Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands
Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes; I reel
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws
Drunken delight; yet I, though mad for joy,
Loathe my long living and am waxen red
As with the shadow of shed blood; behold,
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,
I am flooded with his ebbing; my lit eyes
Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids
Bloodless; my cheek is luminous with blood
Because his face is ashen. Yet, O child,
Son, first-born, fairest — O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,
That shone and clove mine heart through — O soft knees
Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,
Cheeks warm with little kissings — O child, child,
What have we made each other? Lo, I felt
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,
Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,

And all thy goodly glory; with mine hands
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,
A lordly leader; and hear before I die,
"She bore the goodliest sword of all the world."
Oh! oh! For all my life turns round on me;
I am severed from myself, my name is gone,
My name that was a healing, it is changed,
My name is a consuming. From this time,
Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,
My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

SEMICHORUS

She has filled with sighing the city
And the ways thereof with tears
She arose, she girdled her sides,
She set her face as a bride's;
She wept, and she had no pity;
Trembled, and felt no fears.

SEMICHORUS

Her eyes were clear as the sun,
Her brows were fresh as the day;
She girdled herself with gold,
Her robes were manifold;
But the days of her worship are done,
Her praise is taken away.

SEMICHORUS

For she set her hand to the fire,
  With her mouth she kindled the same;
As the mouth of a flute-player,
So was the mouth of her;
With the might of her strong desire
  She blew the breath of the flame.

SEMICHORUS

She set her hand to the wood,
  She took the fire in her hand;
As one who is nigh to death,
She panted with strange breath;
She opened her lips unto blood,
  She breathed and kindled the brand.

SEMICHORUS

As a wood-dove newly shot,
  She sobbed and lifted her breast;
She sighed and covered her eyes,
Filling her lips with sighs;
She sighed, she withdrew herself not,
  She refrained not, taking not rest;

SEMICHORUS

But as the wind which is drouth,
  And as the air which is death,
As storm that severeth ships,
Her breath severing her lips,
The breath came forth of her mouth
  And the fire came forth of her breath.

SECOND MESSENGER

Queen, and you maidens, there is come on us
A thing more deadly than the face of death;
Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

SEMICHORUS

Without sword, without sword is he stricken;
Slain, and slain without hand.

SECOND MESSENGER

For as keen ice divided of the sun
His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh
Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

SEMICHORUS

He wastes as the embers quicken;
With the brand he fades as a brand.

SECOND MESSENGER

Even while they sang and all drew hither and he
Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair
And fixed the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

SEMICHORUS

With rending of cheek and of hair
Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

SECOND MESSENGER

Straightway the crown slid off and smote on earth,
First fallen; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned
And cast his raiment round his face and fell.

SEMICHORUS

Alas for visions that were,
And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

SECOND MESSENGER

But the king twitched his reins in and leapt down
And caught him, crying out twice "O child" and thrice,
So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

SEMICHORUS

Lament with a long lamentation,
Cry, for an end is at hand.

SECOND MESSENGER

O son, he said, son, lift thine eyes, draw breath,
Pity me; but Meleager with sharp lips
Gasped; and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

SEMICHORUS

Cry aloud, O thou kingdom, O nation,
O stricken, a ruinous land.

SECOND MESSENGER

Whereat king Œneus, straightening feeble knees,
With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

SEMICHORUS

Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

SECOND MESSENGER

And they with tears and rendings of the beard
Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

SEMICHORUS

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

SECOND MESSENGER

And lo, the feast turned funeral, and the crowns
Fallen; and the huntress and the hunter trapped;
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

MELEAGER

Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

CHORUS

O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes!
O the grief, O the grace,
As of day when it dies!
Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs?

MELEAGER

Is a bride so fair?
Is a maid so meek?
With unchapleted hair,
With unfilleted cheek,
Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak.

ATALANTA

I would that with feet
Unsandalled, unshod,
Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy of God.

MELEAGER

Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath;
Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

CHORUS

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail and labour and fear.

MELEAGER

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown on my brows!

CHORUS

Whence art thou sent from us?
Whither thy goal?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering of body and soul!

MELEAGER

My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me,
Without lute, without lyre,
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were ill to desire.

CHORUS

Who shall raise thee
From the house of the dead?
Or what man praise thee
That thy praise may be said?
Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

MELEAGER

But thou, O mother,
The dreamer of dreams,

Wilt thou bring forth another
To feel the sun's beams
When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by impassable streams?

ŒNEUS

What thing wilt thou leave me
Now this thing is done?
A man wilt thou give me,
A son for my son,
For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the desirable one?

CHORUS

Thou wert glad above others,
Yea, fair beyond word;
Thou wert glad among mothers;
For each man that heard
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the feet of a bird.

ŒNEUS

Who shall give back
Thy face of old years
With travail made black,
Grown grey among fears,
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

MELEAGER

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, my desire,
Is more chaste than the rain,

More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that live without stain.

ATALANTA

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawn,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made dark in thy dawn.

CHORUS

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again
Nor endured he thy face
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from a terrible place.

ŒNEUS

Thou shouldst die as he dies
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears
With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty, the splendour of spears.

CHORUS

In the ears of the world
It is sung, it is told,
And the light thereof hurled
And the noise thereof rolled
From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of gold.

MELEAGER

Would God ye could carry me
Forth of all these;
Heap sand and bury me
By the Chersonese
Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of Pontic seas.

ŒNEUS

Dost thou mock at our praise
And the singing begun
And the men of strange days
Praising my son
In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon?

MELEAGER

For the dead man no home is;
Ah, better to be
What the flower of the foam is
In fields of the sea,
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-stream a garment for me.

CHORUS

Who shall seek thee and bring
And restore thee thy day,
When the dove dipt her wing
And the oars won their way
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of Propontis with spray?

MELEAGER

Will ye crown me my tomb
Or exalt me my name,
Now my spirits consume,
Now my flesh is a flame?
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping to praise me or shame.

CHORUS

Turn back now, turn thee,
As who turns him to wake;
Though the life in thee burn thee,
Couldst thou bathe it and slake
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon west waters break?

MELEAGER

Would the winds blow me back
Or the waves hurl me home?
Ah, to touch in the track
Where the pine learnt to roam
Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms of water and foam!

CHORUS

The gods may release
That they made fast;
Thy soul shall have ease
In thy limbs at the last;

But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is overpast?

MELEAGER

Not the life of men's veins,
Not of flesh that conceives;
But the grace that remains,
The fair beauty that cleaves
To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews on the leaves.

CHORUS

Thou wert helmsman and chief;
Wilt thou turn in an hour,
Thy limbs to the leaf,
Thy face to the flower,
Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide and devour?

MELEAGER

The years are hungry,
They wail all their days;
The gods wax angry
And weary of praise;
And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straiten their ways?

CHORUS

The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face before God.

MELEAGER

O holy head of Œneus, lo thy son
Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul
With kinship of contaminated lives,
Lo, for their blood I die; and mine own blood
For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,
That death may not discern me from my kin.
Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,
Not shamefully; thou therefore of thy love
Salute me, and bid fare among the dead
Well, as the dead fare; for the best man dead
Fares sadly; nathless I now faring well
Pass without fear where nothing is to fear
Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,
O father, among dark places and men dead.

ŒNEUS

Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,
And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man
In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.
The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,
And me brief days and ways to come at thee.

MELEAGER

Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,
And full of ease and kingdom; seeing in death
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn
Nor light upon the land whither I go.
Live thou and take thy fill of days and die
When thy day comes; and make not much of death

Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.
Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague
Of this my weary body — thou too, queen,
The source and end, the sower and the scythe,
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,
To make me and unmake me — thou, I say,
Althæa, since my father's ploughshare, drawn
Through fatal seedland of a female field,
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,
Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just
Who art unjust and unholy; and with my knees
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,
Dissundering them, devour me; for these limbs
Are as light dust and crumblings from mine urn
Before the fire has touched them; and my face
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,
And all this body a broken barren tree
That was so strong, and all this flower of life
Disbranched and desecrated miserably,
And minished all that god-like muscle and might
And lesser than a man's: for all my veins
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.
I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I
Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,
Mine end with my beginning: and this law,

This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.
And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,
Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,
Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch
Vex the great gods, and overloving men
Slay and are slain for love's sake; and this house
Shall bear much better children; why should these
Weep? but in patience let them live their lives
And mine pass by forgotten: thou alone,
Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,
Keep me in mind a little when I die
Because I was thy first-born; let thy soul
Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead,
Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again
Much happier sons, and all men later born
Exceedingly excel me; yet do thou
Forget not, nor think shame; I was thy son.
Time was I did not shame thee; and time was
I thought to live and make thee honourable
With deeds as great as these men's; but they live,
These, and I die; and what thing should have been
Surely I know not; yet I charge thee, seeing
I am dead already, love me not the less,
Me, O my mother; I charge thee by these gods,
My father's, and that holier breast of thine,
By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,
Love me not less, thy first-born: though grief come,
Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,
And shall come always to thee; for thou knowest,
O mother, O breasts that bare me, for ye know,
O sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes,
Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know

Albeit I kneel not neither touch thy knees,
But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart
I fall about thy feet and worship thee.
And ye farewell now, all my friends; and ye,
Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I,
Sons of my mother's sister; and all farewell
That were in Colchis with me, and bare down
The waves and wars that met us: and though times
Change, and though now I be not anything,
Forget not me among you, what I did
In my good time; for even by all those days,
Those days and this, and your own living souls,
And by the light and luck of you that live,
And by this miserable spoil, and me
Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.
But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands,
And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,
A bitter kiss; and grasp me with thine arms,
Printing with heavy lips my light waste flesh,
Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,
And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,
Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,
Me who have loved thee; seeing without sin done
I am gone down to the empty weary house
Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes
Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.
But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,
And with thy raiment cover foot and head,
And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands
With hands and lips with lips; be pitiful
As thou art maiden perfect; let no man
Defile me to despise me, saying, This man

Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain
Through female fingers in his woof of life,
Dishonourable; for thou hast honoured me.
And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice
And let me go; for the night gathers me,
And in the night shall no man gather fruit.

ATALANTA

Hail thou: but I with heavy face and feet
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

CHORUS

Who shall contend with his lords
  Or cross them or do them wrong?
Who shall bind them as with cords?
  Who shall tame them as with song?
Who shall smite them as with swords?
  For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

ERECHTHEUS

A TRAGEDY

ὦ ταὶ λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι,
Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθᾶναι, δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον.

PIND. *Fr.* 47.

ΑΤ. τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι κἀπιδεσπόζει στρατοῦ;
ΧΟ. οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ' ὑπηκόοι.

ÆSCH. *Pers.* 241–2.

TO

MY MOTHER

PERSONS

ERECHTHEUS.

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.

PRAXITHEA.

CHTHONIA.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

MESSENGER.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

ATHENA.

ERECHTHEUS

ERECHTHEUS

MOTHER of life and death and all men's days,
Earth, whom I chief of all men born would bless,
And call thee with more loving lips than theirs
Mother, for of this very body of thine
And living blood I have my breath and live,
Behold me, even thy son, me crowned of men,
Me made thy child by that strong cunning God
Who fashions fire and iron, who begat
Me for a sword and beacon-fire on thee,
Me fosterling of Pallas, in her shade
Reared, that I first might pay the nursing debt,
Hallowing her fame with flower of third-year feasts,
And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds
To lose the wild wont of their birth, and bear
Clasp of man's knees and steerage of his hand,
Or fourfold service of his fire-swift wheels
That whirl the four-yoked chariot; me the king
Who stand before thee naked now, and cry,
O holy and general mother of all men born,
But mother most and motherliest of mine,
Earth, for I ask thee rather of all the Gods,
What have we done? what word mistimed or work
Hath winged the wild feet of this timeless curse
To fall as fire upon us? Lo, I stand
Here on this brow's crown of the city's head

That crowns its lovely body, till death's hour
Waste it; but now the dew of dawn and birth
Is fresh upon it from thy womb, and we
Behold it born how beauteous; one day more
I see the world's wheel of the circling sun
Roll up rejoicing to regard on earth
This one thing goodliest, fair as heaven or he,
Worth a God's gaze or strife of Gods; but now
Would this day's ebb of their spent wave of strife
Sweep it to sea, wash it on wreck, and leave
A costless thing contemned; and in our stead,
Where these walls were and sounding streets of men,
Make wide a waste for tongueless water-herds
And spoil of ravening fishes; that no more
Should men say, Here was Athens. This shalt thou
Sustain not, nor thy son endure to see,
Nor thou to live and look on; for the womb
Bare me not base that bare me miserable,
To hear this loud brood of the Thracian foam
Break its broad strength of billowy-beating war
Here, and upon it as a blast of death
Blowing, the keen wrath of a fire-souled king,
A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,
A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth
Set for no comfort to the kindly land,
Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,
Eumolpus; nothing sweet in ears of thine
The music of his making, nor a song
Toward hopes of ours auspicious; for the note
Rings as for death oracular to thy sons
That goes before him on the sea-wind blown
Full of this charge laid on me, to put out

The brief light kindled of mine own child's life,
Or with this helmsman hand that steers the state
Run right on the under shoal and ridge of death
The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone
And sails that were to take the wind of time
Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast
In confluent surge of loud calamities
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars
That were to row toward harbour and find rest
In some most glorious haven of all the world
And else may never near it: such a song
The Gods have set his lips on fire withal
Who threatens now in all their names to bring
Ruin; but none of these, thou knowest, have I
Chid with my tongue or cursed at heart for grief,
Knowing how the soul runs reinless on sheer death,
Whose grief or joy takes part against the Gods.
And what they will is more than our desire,
And their desire is more than what we will.
For no man's will and no desire of man's
Shall stand as doth a God's will. Yet, O fair
Mother, that seest me how I cast no word
Against them, plead no reason, crave no cause,
Boast me not blameless, nor beweep me wronged,
By this fair wreath of towers we have decked thee with,
This chaplet that we give thee woven of walls,
This girdle of gate and temple and citadel
Drawn round beneath thy bosom, and fast linked
As to thine heart's root — this dear crown of thine,
This present light, this city — be not thou
Slow to take heed nor slack to strengthen her,
Fare we so short-lived howsoe'er, and pay

What price we may to ransom thee thy town,
Not me my life; but thou that diest not, thou,
Though all our house die for this people's sake,
Keep thou for ours thy crown our city, guard
And give it life the lovelier that we died.

CHORUS

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might
Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night,
Quickening with vision his eye that was veiled,
Freshening the force in her heart that had failed,
That sister fettered and blinded brother
Should have sight by thy grace and delight of each other,
Behold now and see
What profit is given them of thee;
What wrath has enkindled with madness of mind
Her limbs that were bounden, his face that was blind,
To be locked as in wrestle together, and lighten
With fire that shall darken thy fire in the sky,
Body to body and eye against eye
In a war against kind,
Till the bloom of her fields and her high hills whiten
With the foam of his waves more high.
For the sea-marks set to divide of old
The kingdoms to Ocean and Earth assigned,
The hoar sea-fields from the cornfields' gold,
His wine-bright waves from her vineyards' fold,
Frail forces we find
To bridle the spirit of Gods or bind
Till the heat of their hearts wax cold.
But the peace that was stablished between them to stand

Is rent now in twain by the strength of his hand
Who stirs up the storm of his sons overbold
To pluck from fight what he lost of right,
By council and judgment of Gods that spake
And gave great Pallas the strife's fair stake,
The lordship and love of the lovely land,
The grace of the town that hath on it for crown
    But a headband to wear
  Of violets one-hued with her hair:
For the vales and the green high places of earth
    Hold nothing so fair,
And the depths of the sea bear no such birth
  Of the manifold births they bear.
Too well, too well was the great stake worth
A strife divine for the Gods to judge,
A crowned God's triumph, a foiled God's grudge,
Though the loser be strong and the victress wise
Who played long since for so large a prize,
The fruitful immortal anointed adored
Dear city of men without master or lord,
Fair fortress and fostress of sons born free,
Who stand in her sight and in thine, O sun,
Slaves of no man, subjects of none;
A wonder enthroned on the hills and sea,
A maiden crowned with a fourfold glory
That none from the pride of her head may rend,
Violet and olive-leaf purple and hoary,
Song-wreath and story the fairest of fame,
Flowers that the winter can blast not or bend;
A light upon earth as the sun's own flame
    A name as his name,
  Athens, a praise without end.

A noise is arisen against us of waters, [*Str.* 1.
A sound as of battle come up from the sea.
Strange hunters are hard on us, hearts without pity;
They have staked their nets round the fair young city,
That the sons of her strength and her virgin daughters
Should find not whither alive to flee.
And we know not yet of the word unwritten, [*Ant.* 1.
The doom of the Pythian we have not heard;
From the navel of earth and the veiled mid altar
We wait for a token with hopes that falter,
With fears that hang on our hearts thought-smitten
Lest her tongue be kindled with no good word.
O thou not born of the womb, nor bred [*Str.* 2.
In the bride-night's warmth of a changed God's bed,
But thy life as a lightning was flashed from the light of thy father's head.
O chief God's child by a motherless birth,
If aught in thy sight we indeed be worth,
Keep death from us thou, that art none of the Gods of the dead under earth.
Thou that hast power on us, save, if thou wilt; [*Ant.* 2.
Let the blind wave breach not thy wall scarce built;
But bless us not so as by bloodshed, impute not for grace to us guilt,
Nor by price of pollution of blood set us free;
Let the hands be taintless that clasp thy knee,
Nor a maiden be slain to redeem for a maiden her shrine from the sea.
O earth, O sun, turn back [*Str.* 3.
Full on his deadly track
Death, that would smite you black and mar your creatures,

And with one hand disroot
All tender flower and fruit,
With one strike blind and mute the heaven's fair features,
Pluck out the eyes of morn, and make
Silence in the east and blackness whence the bright songs break.
Help, earth, help, heaven, that hear [*Ant.* 3.
The song-notes of our fear,
Shrewd notes and shrill, not clear or joyful-sounding;
Hear, highest of Gods, and stay
Death on his hunter's way,
Full on his forceless prey his beagles hounding;
Break thou his bow, make short his hand,
Maim his fleet foot whose passage kills the living land.
Let a third wave smite not us, father, [*Str.* 4.
Long since sore smitten of twain,
Lest the house of thy son's son perish
And his name be barren on earth.
Whose race wilt thou comfort rather
If none to thy son remain?
Whose seed wilt thou choose to cherish
If his be cut off in the birth?
For the first fair graft of his graffing [*Ant.* 4.
Was rent from its maiden root
By the strong swift hand of a lover
Who fills the night with his breath;
On the lip of the stream low-laughing
Her green soft virginal shoot
Was plucked from the stream-side cover
By the grasp of a love like death.
For a God's was the mouth that kissed her [*Str.* 5.
Who speaks, and the leaves lie dead,

When winter awakes as at warning
To the sound of his foot from Thrace.
Nor happier the bed of her sister
Though Love's self laid her abed
By a bridegroom beloved of the morning
And fair as the dawn's own face.
For Procris, ensnared and ensnaring [*Ant.* 5.
By the fraud of a twofold wile,
With the point of her own spear stricken
By the gift of her own hand fell.
Oversubtle in doubts, overdaring
In deeds and devices of guile,
And strong to quench as to quicken,
Blind Love, they have named thee well.
By thee was the spear's edge whetted [*Str.* 6.
That laid her dead in the dew,
In the moist green glens of the midland
By her dear lord slain and thee.
And him at the cliff's end fretted
By the grey keen waves, him too,
Thine hand from the white-browed headland
Flung down for a spoil to the sea.
But enough now of griefs grey-growing [*Ant.* 6.
Have darkened the house divine,
Have flowered on its boughs and faded,
And green is the brave stock yet.
O father all seeing and all knowing,
Let the last fruit fall not of thine
From the tree with whose boughs we are shaded,
From the stock that thy son's hand set.

ERECHTHEUS

O daughter of Cephisus, from all time
Wise have I found thee, wife and queen, of heart
Perfect; nor in the days that knew not wind
Nor days when storm blew death upon our peace
Was thine heart swoln with seed of pride, or bowed
With blasts of bitter fear that break men's souls
Who lift too high their minds toward heaven, in thought
Too godlike grown for worship; but of mood
Equal, in good time reverent of time bad,
And glad in ill days of the good that were.
Nor now too would I fear thee, now misdoubt
Lest fate should find thee lesser than thy doom,
Chosen if thou be to bear and to be great
Haply beyond all women; and the word
Speaks thee divine, dear queen, that speaks thee dead,
Dead being alive, or quick and dead in one
Shall not men call thee living? yet I fear
To slay thee timeless with my proper tongue,
With lips, thou knowest, that love thee; and such work
Was never laid of Gods on men, such word
No mouth of man learnt ever, as from mine
Most loth to speak thine ear most loth shall take
And hold it hateful as the grave to hear.

PRAXITHEA

That word there is not in all speech of man,
King, that being spoken of the Gods and thee
I have not heart to honour, or dare hold
More than I hold thee or the Gods in hate
Hearing; but if my heart abhor it heard

Being insubmissive, hold me not thy wife
But use me like a stranger, whom thine hand
Hath fed by chance and finding thence no thanks
Flung off for shame's sake to forgetfulness.

ERECHTHEUS

O, of what breath shall such a word be made,
Or from what heart find utterance? Would my tongue
Were rent forth rather from the quivering root
Than made as fire or poison thus for thee.

PRAXITHEA

But if thou speak of blood, and I that hear
Be chosen of all for this land's love to die
And save to thee thy city, know this well,
Happiest I hold me of her seed alive.

ERECHTHEUS

O sun that seest, what saying was this of thine,
God, that thy power has breathed into my lips?
For from no sunlit shrine darkling it came.

PRAXITHEA

What portent from the mid oracular place
Hath smitten thee so like a curse that flies
Wingless, to waste men with its plagues? yet speak.

ERECHTHEUS

Thy blood the Gods require not; take this first.

PRAXITHEA

To me than thee more grievous this should sound.

ERECHTHEUS

That word rang truer and bitterer than it knew.

PRAXITHEA

This is not then thy grief, to see me die?

ERECHTHEUS

Die shalt thou not, yet give thy blood to death.

PRAXITHEA

If this ring worse I know not; strange it rang.

ERECHTHEUS

Alas, thou knowest not; woe is me that know.

PRAXITHEA

And woe shall mine be, knowing; yet halt not here.

ERECHTHEUS

Guiltless of blood this state may stand no more.

PRAXITHEA

Firm let it stand whatever bleed or fall.

ERECHTHEUS

O Gods, that I should say it shall and weep.

PRAXITHEA

Weep, and say this? no tears should bathe such words.

ERECHTHEUS

Woe's me that I must weep upon them, woe.

PRAXITHEA

What stain is on them for thy tears to cleanse?

ERECHTHEUS

A stain of blood unpurgeable with tears.

PRAXITHEA

Whence? for thou sayest it is and is not mine.

ERECHTHEUS

Hear then and know why only of all men I
That bring such news as mine is, I alone
Must wash good words with weeping; I and thou,
Woman, must wail to hear men sing, must groan
To see their joy who love us; all our friends
Save only we, and all save we that love
This holiness of Athens, in our sight
Shall lift their hearts up, in our hearing praise
Gods whom we may not; for to these they give
Life of their children, flower of all their seed,
For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes

Harvest; but we for all our good things, we
Have at their hands which fill all these folk full
Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,
Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck; which of these,
Which wilt thou first give thanks for? all are thine.

PRAXITHEA

What first they give who give this city good,
For that first given to save it I give thanks
First, and thanks heartier from a happier tongue,
More than for any my peculiar grace
Shown me and not my country; next for this,
That none of all these but for all these I
Must bear my burden, and no eye but mine
Weep of all women's in this broad land born
Who see their land's deliverance; but much more,
But most for this I thank them most of all,
That this their edge of doom is chosen to pierce
My heart and not my country's; for the sword
Drawn to smite there and sharpened for such stroke
Should wound more deep than any turned on me.

CHORUS

Well fares the land that bears such fruit, and well
The spirit that breeds such thought and speech in man.

ERECHTHEUS

O woman, thou hast shamed my heart with thine,
To show so strong a patience; take then all;
For all shall break not nor bring down thy soul.
The word that journeying to the bright God's shrine

Who speaks askance and darkling, but his name
Hath in it slaying and ruin broad writ out,
I heard, hear thou: thus saith he; There shall die
One soul for all this people; from thy womb
Came forth the seed that here on dry bare ground
Death's hand must sow untimely, to bring forth
Nor blade nor shoot in season, being by name
To the under Gods made holy, who require
For this land's life her death and maiden blood
To save a maiden city. Thus I heard,
And thus with all said leave thee; for save this
No word is left us, and no hope alive.

CHORUS

He hath uttered too surely his wrath not obscurely, nor wrapt
as in mists of his breath, [*Str.*
The master that lightens not hearts he enlightens, but gives
them foreknowledge of death.
As a bolt from the cloud hath he sent it aloud and proclaimed
it afar,
From the darkness and height of the horror of night hath he
shown us a star.
Star may I name it and err not, or flame shall I say,
Born of the womb that was born for the tomb of the day?
O Night, whom other but thee for mother, and Death for the
father, Night, [*Ant.*
Shall we dream to discover, save thee and thy lover, to bring
such a sorrow to sight?
From the slumberless bed for thy bedfellow spread and his
bride under earth
Hast thou brought forth a wild and insatiable child, an
unbearable birth.

Fierce are the fangs of his wrath, and the pangs that they give;
None is there, none that may bear them, not one that would live.

CHTHONIA

Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide
My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun
I set my foot not moved of mine own will,
Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed
Turn eyes too broad or doglike unabashed
On reverend heads of men and thence on thine,
Mother, now covered from the light and bowed
As hers who mourns her brethren; but what grief
Bends thy blind head thus earthward, holds thus mute,
I know not till thy will be to lift up
Toward mine thy sorrow-muffled eyes and speak;
And till thy will be would I know this not.

PRAXITHEA

Old men and childless, or if sons ye have seen
And daughters, elder-born were these than mine,
Look on this child, how young of years, how sweet,
How scant of time and green of age her life
Puts forth its flower of girlhood; and her gait
How virginal, how soft her speech, her eyes
How seemly smiling; wise should all ye be,
All honourable and kindly men of age;
Now give me counsel and one word to say
That I may bear to speak, and hold my peace
Henceforth for all time even as all ye now.
Dumb are ye all, bowed eyes and tongueless mouths,

Unprofitable; if this were wind that speaks,
As much its breath might move you. Thou then, child,
Set thy sweet eyes on mine; look through them well;
Take note of all the writing of my face
As of a tablet or a tomb inscribed
That bears me record; lifeless now, my life
Thereon that was think written; brief to read,
Yet shall the scripture sear thine eyes as fire
And leave them dark as dead men's. Nay, dear child,
Thou hast no skill, my maiden, and no sense
To take such knowledge; sweet is all thy lore,
And all this bitter; yet I charge thee learn
And love and lay this up within thine heart,
Even this my word; less ill it were to die
Than live and look upon thy mother dead,
Thy mother-land that bare thee; no man slain
But him who hath seen it shall men count unblest,
None blest as him who hath died and seen it not.

CHTHONIA

That sight some God keep from me though I die.

PRAXITHEA

A God from thee shall keep it; fear not this.

CHTHONIA

Thanks all my life long shall he gain of mine.

PRAXITHEA

Short gain of all yet shall he get of thee.

CHTHONIA

Brief be my life, yet so long live my thanks.

PRAXITHEA

So long? so little; how long shall they live?

CHTHONIA

Even while I see the sunlight and thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA

Would mine might shut ere thine upon the sun.

CHTHONIA

For me thou prayest unkindly; change that prayer.

PRAXITHEA

Not well for me thou sayest, and ill for thee.

CHTHONIA

Nay, for me well, if thou shalt live, not I.

PRAXITHEA

How live, and lose these loving looks of thine?

CHTHONIA

It seems I too, thus praying, then, love thee not.

PRAXITHEA

Lov'st thou not life? what wouldst thou do to die?

CHTHONIA

Well, but not more than all things, love I life.

PRAXITHEA

And fain wouldst keep it as thine age allows?

CHTHONIA

Fain would I live, and fain not fear to die.

PRAXITHEA

That I might bid thee die not! Peace; no more.

CHORUS

A godlike race of grief the Gods have set
For these to run matched equal, heart with heart.

PRAXITHEA

Child of the chief of Gods, and maiden crowned,
Queen of these towers and fostress of their king,
Pallas, and thou my father's holiest head,
A living well of life nor stanched nor stained,
O God Cephisus, thee too charge I next,
Be to me judge and witness; nor thine ear
Shall now my tongue invoke not, thou to me
Most hateful of things holy, mournfullest
Of all old sacred streams that wash the world,
Ilissus, on whose marge at flowery play
A whirlwind-footed bridegroom found my child
And rapt her northward where mine elder-born
Keeps now the Thracian bride-bed of a God

Intolerable to seamen, but this land
Finds him in hope for her sake favourable,
A gracious son by wedlock; hear me then
Thou likewise, if with no faint heart or false
The word I say be said, the gift be given,
Which might I choose I had rather die than give
Or speak and die not. Ere thy limbs were made
Or thine eyes lightened, strife, thou knowest, my child,
'Twixt God and God had risen, which heavenlier name
Should here stand hallowed, whose more liberal grace
Should win this city's worship, and our land
To which of these do reverence; first the lord
Whose wheels make lightnings of the foam-flowered sea
Here on this rock, whose height brow-bound with dawn
Is head and heart of Athens, one sheer blow
Struck, and beneath the triple wound that shook
The stony sinews and stark roots of the earth
Sprang toward the sun a sharp salt fount, and sank
Where lying it lights the heart up of the hill,
A well of bright strange brine; but she that reared
Thy father with her same chaste fostering hand
Set for a sign against it in our guard
The holy bloom of the olive, whose hoar leaf
High in the shadowy shrine of Pandrosus
Hath honour of us all; and of this strife
The twelve most high Gods judging with one mouth
Acclaimed her victress; wroth whereat, as wronged
That she should hold from him such prize and place,
The strong king of the tempest-rifted sea
Loosed reinless on the low Thriasian plain
The thunders of his chariots, swallowing stunned
Earth, beasts, and men, the whole blind foundering world

That was the sun's at morning, and ere noon
Death's; nor this only prey fulfilled his mind;
For with strange crook-toothed prows of Carian folk
Who snatch a sanguine life out of the sea,
Thieves keen to pluck their bloody fruit of spoil
From the grey fruitless waters, has their God
Furrowed our shores to waste them, as the fields
Were landward harried from the north with swords
Aonian, sickles of man-slaughtering edge
Ground for no hopeful harvest of live grain
Against us in Bœotia; these being spent,
Now this third time his wind of wrath has blown
Right on this people a mightier wave of war,
Three times more huge a ruin; such its ridge
Foam-rimmed and hollow like the womb of heaven,
But black for shining, and with death for life
Big now to birth and ripe with child, full-blown
With fear and fruit of havoc, takes the sun
Out of our eyes, darkening the day, and blinds
The fair sky's face unseasonably with change,
A cloud in one and billow of battle, a surge
High reared as heaven with monstrous surf of spears
That shake on us their shadow, till men's heads
Bend, and their hearts even with its forward wind
Wither, so blasts all seed in them of hope
Its breath and blight of presage; yea, even now
The winter of this wind out of the deeps
Makes cold our trust in comfort of the Gods
And blinds our eye toward outlook; yet not here,
Here never shall the Thracian plant on high
For ours his father's symbol, nor with wreaths
A strange folk wreathe it upright set and crowned

Here where our natural people born behold
The golden Gorgon of the shield's defence
That screens their flowering olive, nor strange Gods
Be graced, and Pallas here have praise no more.
And if this be not I must give my child,
Thee, mine own very blood and spirit of mine,
Thee to be slain. Turn from me, turn thine eyes
A little from me; I can bear not yet
To see if still they smile on mine or no,
If fear make faint the light in them, or faith
Fix them as stars of safety. Need have we,
Sore need of stars that set not in mid storm,
Lights that outlast the lightnings; yet my heart
Endures not to make proof of thine or these,
Not yet to know thee whom I made, and bare
What manner of woman; had I borne thee man,
I had made no question of thine eyes or heart,
Nor spared to read the scriptures in them writ,
Wert thou my son; yet couldst thou then but die
Fallen in sheer fight by chance and charge of spears
And have no more of memory, fill no tomb
More famous than thy fellows in fair field,
Where many share the grave, many the praise;
But one crown shall one only girl my child
Wear, dead for this dear city, and give back life
To him that gave her and to me that bare,
And save two sisters living; and all this,
Is this not all good? I shall give thee, child,
Thee but by fleshly nature mine, to bleed
For dear land's love; but if the city fall
What part is left me in my children then?
But if it stand and thou for it lie dead,

Then hast thou in it a better part than we,
A holier portion than we all; for each
Hath but the length of his own life to live,
And this most glorious mother-land on earth
To worship till that life have end; but thine
Hath end no more than hers; thou, dead, shalt live
Till Athens live not; for the days and nights
Given of thy bare brief dark dividual life,
Shall she give thee half all her agelong own
And all its glory; for thou givest her these;
But with one hand she takes and gives again
More than I gave or she requires of thee.
Come therefore, I will make thee fit for death,
I that could give thee, dear, no gift at birth
Save of light life that breathes and bleeds, even I
Will help thee to this better gift than mine
And lead thee by this little living hand
That death shall make so strong, to that great end
Whence it shall lighten like a God's, and strike
Dead the strong heart of battle that would break
Athens; but ye, pray for this land, old men,
That it may bring forth never child on earth
To love it less, for none may more, than we.

CHORUS

Out of the north wind grief came forth, [*Str.* 1.
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.
Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of this last,
The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.
Out of the north skies full of his cloud,
With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd

At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,
At the axle of a strong king's car
That has girded on the girdle of war —
With hands that lightened the skies in sunder
And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,
A God, a great God strange of name,
With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,
To the mountain bed of a maiden came,
Oreithyia, the bride mismated,
Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed
With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead;
Without garland, without glory, without song,
As a fawn by night on the hills belated,
Given over for a spoil unto the strong.
From lips how pale so keen a wail [*Ant.* 1.
At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of her hair,
It rang from the mountain even to the wave;
Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*
From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea:
And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee;
As a virgin overborne with shame,
She besought him by her spouseless fame,
By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried
And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,
And all her flower of body, born
To match the maidenhood of morn,
With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and torn.
Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision
Falling by night in his old friend's sight,
To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light;
Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour

Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,
And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.
With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his lips as of thunder, [*Str.* 2.
In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,
From the height of the heaven that was rent with the roar of his coming in sunder,
Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.
And the pines of the hills were as green reeds shattered,
And their branches as buds of the soft spring scattered,
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the south,
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,
At the cry of his coming out of heaven.
And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that lightened,
And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.
But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not her wrong that he wrought her, [*Ant.* 2.
When her locks as leaves were shed before his breath,
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the cry was a God's that besought her,
Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas with death.
For the heart was molten within her to hear,
And her knees beneath her were loosened for fear,
And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,
And the soft new bloom of the green earth's daughter
Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree;
As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast lifted,
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath drifted,
From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,

With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,
As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

Of this hoary-headed woe [*Epode.*
Song made memory long ago;
Now a younger grief to mourn
Needs a new song younger born.
Who shall teach our tongues to reach
What strange height of saddest speech,
For the new bride's sake that is given to be
A stay to fetter the foot of the sea,
Lest it quite spurn down and trample the town,
Ere the violets be dead that were plucked for its crown,
Or its olive-leaf whiten and wither?
Who shall say of the wind's way
That he journeyed yesterday,
Or the track of the storm that shall sound to-morrow,
If the new be more than the grey-grown sorrow?
For the wind of the green first season was keen,
And the blast shall be sharper than blew between
That the breath of the sea blows hither.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Old men, grey borderers on the march of death,
Tongue-fighters, tough of talk and sinewy speech,
Else nerveless, from no crew of such faint folk
Whose tongues are stouter than their hands come I
To bid not you to battle; let them strike
Whose swords are sharper than your keen-tongued wail,
And ye, sit fast and sorrow; but what man
Of all this land-folk and earth-labouring herd
For heart or hand seems foremost, him I call

If heart be his to hearken, him bid forth
To try if one be in the sun's sight born
Of all that grope and grovel on dry ground
That may join hands in battle-grip for death
With them whose seed and strength is of the sea.

CHORUS

Know thou this much for all thy loud blast blown,
We lack not hands to speak with, swords to plead,
For proof of peril, not of boisterous breath,
Sea-wind and storm of barren mouths that foam
And rough rock's edge of menace; and short space
May lesson thy large ignorance and inform
This insolence with knowledge if there live
Men earth-begotten of no tenderer thews
Than knit the great joints of the grim sea's brood
With hasps of steel together; heaven to help,
One man shall break, even on their own flood's verge,
That iron bulk of battle; but thine eye
That sees it now swell higher than sand or shore
Haply shall see not when thine host shall shrink.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Not haply, nay, but surely, shall not thine.

CHORUS

That lot shall no God give who fights for thee.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men?

CHORUS

Nor them forbid we nor shalt thou constrain.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Yet say'st thou none shall make the good lot mine?

CHORUS

Of thy side none, nor moved for fear of thee.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Gods hast thou then to baffle Gods of ours?

CHORUS

Nor thine nor mine, but equal-souled are they.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Toward good and ill, then, equal-eyed of soul?

CHORUS

Nay, but swift-eyed to note where ill thoughts breed.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Thy shaft word-feathered flies yet far of me.

CHORUS

Pride knows not, wounded, till the heart be cleft.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

No shaft wounds deep whose wing is plumed with words,

CHORUS

Lay that to heart, and bid thy tongue learn grace.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Grace shall thine own crave soon too late of mine.

CHORUS

Boast thou till then, but I wage words no more.

ERECHTHEUS

Man, what shrill wind of speech and wrangling air
Blows in our ears a summons from thy lips
Winged with what message, or what gift or grace
Requiring? none but what his hand may take
Here may the foe think hence to reap, nor this
Except some doom from Godward yield it him.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

King of this land-folk, by my mouth to thee
Thus saith the son of him that shakes thine earth,
Eumolpus; now the stakes of war are set,
For land or sea to win by throw and wear;
Choose therefore or to quit thy side and give
The palm unfought for to his bloodless hand,
Or by that father's sceptre, and the foot
Whose tramp far off makes tremble for pure fear
Thy soul-struck mother, piercing like a sword
The immortal womb that bare thee; by the waves
That no man bridles and that bound thy world,
And by the winds and storms of all the sea,
He swears to raze from eyeshot of the sun

This city named not of his father's name,
And wash to deathward down one flood of doom
This whole fresh brood of earth yeaned naturally,
Green yet and faint in its first blade, unblown
With yellow hope of harvest; so do thou,
Seeing whom thy time is come to meet, for fear
Yield, or gird up thy force to fight and die.

ERECHTHEUS

To fight then be it; for if to die or live,
No man but only a God knows this much yet
Seeing us fare forth, who bear but in our hands
The weapons not the fortunes of our fight;
For these now rest as lots that yet undrawn
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour; but this
I know, not thou, whose hollow mouth of storm
Is but a warlike wind, a sharp salt breath
That bites and wounds not; death nor life of mine
Shall give to death or lordship of strange kings
The soul of this live city, nor their heel
Bruise her dear brow discrowned, nor snaffle or goad
Wound her free mouth or stain her sanguine side
Yet masterless of man; so bid thy lord
Learn ere he weep to learn it, and too late
Gnash teeth that could not fasten on her flesh,
And foam his life out in dark froth of blood
Vain as a wind's waif of the loud-mouthed sea
Torn from the wave's edge whitening. Tell him this;
Though thrice his might were mustered for our scathe
And thicker set with fence of thorn-edged spears
Than sands are whirled about the wintering beach
When storms have swoln the rivers, and their blasts

Have breached the broad sea-banks with stress of sea,
That waves of inland and the main make war
As men that mix and grapple; though his ranks
Were more to number than all wildwood leaves
The wind waves on the hills of all the world,
Yet should the heart not faint, the head not fall,
The breath not fail of Athens. Say, the Gods
From lips that have no more on earth to say
Have told thee this the last good news or ill
That I shall speak in sight of earth and sun
Or he shall hear and see them: for the next
That ear of his from tongue of mine may take
Must be the first word spoken underground
From dead to dead in darkness. Hence; make haste,
Lest war's fleet foot be swifter than thy tongue
And I that part not to return again
On him that comes not to depart away
Be fallen before thee; for the time is full,
And with such mortal hope as knows not fear
I go this high last way to the end of all.

CHORUS

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten them,
[*Str.* 1.
Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame?
Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor hasten them,
Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame;
Till the passion be broken in his breast
And the might thereof molten into rest,
And the rain of eyes that weep be dry,
And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.

Death at last for all men is a harbour; yet they flee from it,
[*Ant.* 1.
Set sails to the storm-wind and again to sea;
Yet for all their labour no whit further shall they be from it,
Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.
And with anguish of travail until night
Shall they steer into shipwreck out of sight,
And with oars that break and shrouds that strain
Shall they drive whence no ship steers again.
Bitter and strange is the word of the God most high, [*Str.* 2.
And steep the strait of his way,
Through a pass rock-rimmed and narrow the light that gleams
On the faces of men falls faint as the dawn of dreams,
The dayspring of death as a star in an under sky
Where night is the dead men's day.
As darkness and storm is his will that on earth is done, [*Ant.* 2.
As a cloud is the face of his strength.
King of kings, holiest of holies, and mightiest of might,
Lord of the lords of thine heaven that are humble in thy sight,
Hast thou set not an end for the path of the fires of the sun,
To appoint him a rest at length?
Hast thou told not by measure the waves of the waste wide sea,
[*Str.* 3.
And the ways of the wind their master and thrall to thee?
Hast thou filled not the furrows with fruit for the world's increase?
Has thine ear not heard from of old or thine eye not read
The thought and the deed of us living, the doom of us dead?
Hast thou made not war upon earth, and again made peace?
Therefore, O father, that seest us whose lives are a breath,
[*Ant.* 3.

Take off us thy burden, and give us not wholly to death.
For lovely is life, and the law wherein all things live,
And gracious the season of each, and the hour of its kind,
And precious the seed of his life in a wise man's mind;
But all save life for his life will a base man give.
But a life that is given for the life of the whole live land, [*Str.* 4.
From a heart unspotted a gift of a spotless hand,
Of pure will perfect and free, for the land's life's sake,
What man shall fear not to put forth his hand and take?
For the fruit of a sweet life plucked in its pure green prime
[*Ant.* 4.
On his hand who plucks is as blood, on his soul as crime.
With cursing ye buy not blessing, nor peace with strife,
And the hand is hateful that chaffers with death for life.
Hast thou heard, O my heart, and endurest [*Str.* 5.
The word that is said,
What a garland by sentence found surest
Is wrought for what head?
With what blossomless flowerage of sea-foam and blood-coloured foliage inwound
It shall crown as a heifer's for slaughter the forehead for marriage uncrowned?
How the veils and the wreaths that should cover [*Ant.* 5.
The brows of the bride
Shall be shed by the breath of what lover
And scattered aside?
With a blast of the mouth of what bridgeroom the crowns shall be cast from her hair,
And her head by what altar made humble be left of them naked and bare?
At a shrine unbeloved of a God unbeholden a gift shall be given for the land, [*Str.* 6.

That its ramparts though shaken with clamour and horror of manifold waters may stand:
That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets that thrust up their heads to the sun
May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves overmastering their bulwarks begun.
As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bridegroom, a flower for the couch of her lord; [*Ant.* 6.
They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or curse them, and cover her eyes from the sword.
They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle, and darken the light of her face,
That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart be not molten, his hand give not grace.
If she weep then, yet may none that hear take pity; [*Str.* 7.
If she cry not, none should hearken though she cried.
Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,
With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride?
Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favour, [*Ant.* 7.
Dear of all men held thy people to her heart;
Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine savour,
Who hath built with us her throne and chosen her part,
Bloodless are her works, and sweet [*Epode.*
All the ways that feel her feet;
From the empire of her eyes
Light takes life and darkness flies;
From the harvest of her hands
Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands;
Wisdom of her word is made;
At her strength is strength afraid;
From the beam of her bright spear
War's fleet foot goes back for fear;

In her shrine she reared the birth
Fire-begotten on live earth;
Glory from her helm was shed
On his olive-shadowed head;
By no hand but his shall she
Scourge the storms back of the sea,
To no fame but his shall give
Grace being dead with hers to live,
And in double name divine
Half the godhead of their shrine.
But now with what word, with what woe may we meet
The timeless passage of piteous feet,
Hither that bend to the last way's end
They shall walk upon earth?
What song be rolled for a bride black-stoled
And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold?
For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken
And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have spoken,
To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth
That we counted so sweet,
What way thy steps to what bride-feast tend,
What gift he must give that shall wed thee for token
If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

CHTHONIA

People, old men of my city, lordly wise and hoar of head,
I a spouseless bride and crownless but with garlands of the dead
From the fruitful light turn silent to my dark unchilded bed.

CHORUS

Wise of word was he too surely, but with deadlier wisdom wise,

First who gave thee name from under earth, no breath from upper skies,
When, foredoomed to this day's darkness, their first daylight filled thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA

Child, my child that wast and art but death's and now no more of mine,
Half my heart is cloven with anguish by the sword made sharp for thine,
Half exalts its wing for triumph, that I bare thee thus divine.

CHTHONIA

Though for me the sword's edge thirst that sets no point against thy breast,
Mother, O my mother, where I drank of life and fell on rest.
Thine, not mine, is all the grief that marks this hour accurst and blest.

CHORUS

Sweet thy sleep and sweet the bosom was that gave thee sleep and birth;
Harder now the breast, and girded with no marriage-band for girth,
Where thine head shall sleep, the namechild of the lords of under earth.

PRAXITHEA

Dark the name and dark the gifts they gave thee, child, in child-birth were,
Sprung from him that rent the womb of earth, a bitter seed to bear,
Born with groanings of the ground that gave him way toward heaven's dear air.

CHTHONIA

Day to day makes answer, first to last, and life to death; but I,
Born for death's sake, die for life's sake, if indeed this be to die,
This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs of time
run dry.

CHORUS

Children shalt thou bear to memory, that to man shalt bring
forth none;
Yea, the lordliest that lift eyes and hearts and songs to meet
the sun,
Names to fire men's ears like music till the round world's race
be run.

PRAXITHEA

I thy mother, named of Gods that wreak revenge and brand with
blame,
Now for thy love shall be loved as thou, and famous with thy
fame,
While this city's name on earth shall be for earth her mightiest
name.

CHTHONIA

That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine
Scarce yet sun-warmed with summer, this thin life
Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days,
To build again my city; that no drop
Fallen of these innocent veins on the cold ground
But shall help knit the joints of her firm walls
To knead the stones together, and make sure
The band about her maiden girdlestead
Once fastened, and of all men's violent hands
Inviolable for ever; these to me

Were no such gifts as crave no thanksgiving,
If with one blow dividing the sheer life
I might make end, and one pang wind up all
And seal mine eyes from sorrow; for such end
The Gods give none they love not; but my heart,
That leaps up lightened of all sloth or fear
To take the sword's point, yet with one thought's load
Flags, and falls back, broken of wing, that halts
Maimed in mid flight for thy sake and borne down,
Mother, that in the places where I played
An arm's length from thy bosom and no more
Shalt find me never, nor thine eye wax glad
To mix with mine its eyesight and for love
Laugh without word, filled with sweet light, and speak
Divine dumb things of the inward spirit and heart,
Moved silently; nor hand or lip again
Touch hand or lip of either, but for mine
Shall thine meet only shadows of swift night,
Dreams and dead thoughts of dead things; and the bed
Thou strewedst, a sterile place for all time, strewn
For my sleep only, with its void sad sheets
Shall vex thee, and the unfruitful coverlid
For empty days reproach me dead, that leave
No profit of my body, but am gone
As one not worth being born to bear no seed,
A sapless stock and branchless; yet thy womb
Shall want not honour of me, that brought forth
For all this people freedom, and for earth
From the unborn city born out of my blood
To light the face of all men evermore
Glory; but lay thou this to thy great heart
Whereunder in the dark of birth conceived

Mine unlit life lay girdled with the zone
That bound thy bridal bosom; set this thought
Against all edge of evil as a sword
To beat back sorrow, that for all the world
Thou brought'st me forth a saviour, who shall save
Athens; for none but I from none but thee
Shall take this death for garland; and the men
Mine unknown children of unsounded years,
My sons unrisen shall rise up at thine hand,
Sown of thy seed to bring forth seed to thee,
And call thee most of all most fruitful found
Blessed; but me too for my barren womb
More than my sisters for their children born
Shall these give honour, yea in scorn's own place
Shall men set love and bring for mockery praise
And thanks for curses; for the dry wild vine
Scoffed at and cursed of all men that was I
Shall shed them wine to make the world's heart warm,
That all eyes seeing may lighten, and all ears
Hear and be kindled; such a draught to drink
Shall be the blood that bids this dust bring forth,
The chaliced life here spilt on this mine earth,
Mine, my great father's mother; whom I pray
Take me now gently, tenderly take home,
And softly lay in his my cold chaste hand
Who is called of men by my name, being of Gods
Charged only and chosen to bring men under earth,
And now must lead and stay me with his staff
A silent soul led of a silent God,
Toward sightless things led sightless; and on earth
I see now but the shadow of mine end,
And this last night of all for me in heaven.

PRAXITHEA

Farewell I bid thee; so bid thou not me,
Lest the Gods hear and mock us; yet on these
I lay the weight not of this grief, nor cast
Ill words for ill deeds back; for if one say
They have done men wrong, what hurt have they to hear,
Or he what help to have said it? surely, child,
If one among men born might say it and live
Blameless, none more than I may, who being vexed
Hold yet my peace; for now through tears enough
Mine eyes have seen the sun that from this day
Thine shall see never more; and in the night
Enough has blown of evil, and mine ears
With wail enough the winds have filled, and brought
Too much of cloud from over the sharp sea
To mar for me the morning; such a blast
Rent from these wide void arms and helpless breast
Long since one graft of me disbranched, and bore
Beyond the wild ways of the unwandered world
And loud wastes of the thunder-throated sea,
Springs of the night and openings of the heaven,
The old garden of the Sun; whence never more
From west or east shall winds bring back that blow
From folds of opening heaven or founts of night
The flower of mine once ravished, born my child
To bear strange children; nor on wings of theirs
Shall comfort come back to me, nor their sire
Breathe help upon my peril, nor his strength
Raise up my weakness; but of Gods and men
I drift unsteered on ruin, and the wave
Darkens my head with imminent height, and hangs

Dumb, filled too full with thunder that shall leave
These ears death-deafened when the tide finds tongue
And all its wrath bears on them; thee, O child,
I help not, nor am holpen; fain, ah, fain,
More than was ever mother born of man,
Were I to help thee; fain beyond all prayer,
Beyond all thought fain to redeem thee, torn
More timeless from me sorrowing than the dream
That was thy sister; so shalt thou be too,
Thou but a vision, shadow-shaped of sleep,
By grief made out of nothing; now but once
I touch, but once more hold thee, one more kiss
This last time and none other ever more
Leave on thy lips and leave them. Go; thou wast
My heart, my heart's blood, life-blood of my life,
My child, my nursling: now this breast once thine
Shall rear again no children; never now
Shall any mortal blossom born like thee
Lie there, nor ever with small silent mouth
Draw the sweet springs dry for an hour that feed
The blind blithe life that knows not; never head
Rest here to make these cold veins warm, nor eye
Laugh itself open with the lips that reach
Lovingly toward a fount more loving; these
Death makes as all good lesser things now dead,
And all the latter hopes that flowered from these
And fall as these fell fruitless; no joy more
Shall man take of thy maidenhood, no tongue
Praise it; no good shall eyes get more of thee
That lightened for thy love's sake. Now, take note,
Give ear, O all ye people, that my word
May pierce your hearts through, and the stroke that cleaves

Be fruitful to them; so shall all that hear
Grow great at heart with child of thought most high
And bring forth seed in season; this my child,
This flower of this my body, this sweet life,
This fair live youth I give you, to be slain,
Spent, shed, poured out, and perish; take my gift
And give it death and the under Gods who crave
So much for that they give; for this is more,
Much more is this than all we; for they give
Freedom, and for a blast, an air of breath,
A little soul that is not, they give back
Light for all eyes, cheer for all hearts, and life
That fills the world's width full of fame and praise
And mightier love than children's. This they give,
The grace to make thy country great, and wrest
From time and death power to take hold on her
And strength to scathe for ever; and this gift,
Is this no more than man's love is or mine,
Mine and all mothers'? nay, where that seems more,
Where one loves life of child, wife, father, friend,
Son, husband, mother, more than this, even there
Are all these lives worth nothing, all loves else
With this love slain and buried, and their tomb
A thing for shame to spit on; for what love
Hath a slave left to love with? or the heart
Base-born and bound in bondage fast to fear,
What should it do to love thee? what hath he,
The man that hath no country? Gods nor men
Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,
Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,
Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,
Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs

That breed things abject; but who loves on earth
Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,
Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake,
But only this thing most, more this than all,
He loves all well and well of all is loved,
And this love lives for ever. See now, friends,
My countrymen, my brothers, with what heart
I give you this that of your hands again
The Gods require for Athens; as I give
So give ye to them what their hearts would have
Who shall give back things better; yea, and these
I take for me to witness, all these Gods,
Were their great will more grievous than it is,
Not one but three, for this one thin-spun thread
A threefold band of children would I give
For this land's love's sake; for whose love to-day
I bid thee, child, fare deathward and farewell.

CHORUS

O wofullest of women, yet of all
Happiest, thy word be hallowed; in all time
Thy name shall blossom, and from strange new tongues
High things be spoken of thee; for such grace
The Gods have dealt to no man, that on none
Have laid so heavy sorrow. From this day
Live thou assured of godhead in thy blood,
And in thy fate no lowlier than a God
In all good things and evil; such a name
Shall be thy child this city's, and thine own
Next hers that called it Athens. Go now forth
Blest, and grace with thee to the doors of death.

CHTHONIA

O city, O glory of Athens, O crown of my father's land,
farewell.

CHORUS

For welfare is given her of thee.

CHTHONIA

O Goddess, be good to thy people, that in them dominion and
freedom may dwell.

CHORUS

Turn from us the strengths of the sea.

CHTHONIA

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of all nations
made glad with the sun.

CHORUS

For the cloud is blown back with my breath.

CHTHONIA

With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee,
O land where my days now are done.

CHORUS

But her life shall be born of thy death.

CHTHONIA

I put on me the darkness thy shadow, my mother, and symbol,
O Earth, of my name.

CHORUS

For thine was her witness from birth.

CHTHONIA

In thy likeness I come to thee darkling, a daughter whose dawn and her even are the same.

CHORUS

Be thine heart to her gracious, O Earth.

CHTHONIA

To thine own kind be kindly, for thy son's name's sake.

CHORUS

That sons unborn may praise thee and thy first-born son.

CHTHONIA

Give me thy sleep, who give thee all my life awake.

CHORUS

Too swift a sleep, ere half the web of day be spun.

CHTHONIA

Death brings the shears or ever life wind up the weft.

CHORUS

Their edge is ground and sharpened; who shall stay his hand?

CHTHONIA

The woof is thin, a small short life, with no thread left.

CHORUS

Yet hath it strength, stretched out, to shelter all the land.

CHTHONIA

Too frail a tent for covering, and a screen too strait.

CHORUS

Yet broad enough for buckler shall thy sweet life be.

CHTHONIA

A little bolt to bar off battle from the gate.

CHORUS

A wide sea-wall, that shatters the besieging sea.

CHTHONIA

I lift up mine eyes from the skirts of the shadow, [*Str.*
From the border of death to the limits of light;
O streams and rivers of mountain and meadow
That hallow the last of my sight,
O father that wast of my mother
Cephisus, O thou too his brother
From the bloom of whose banks as a prey
Winds harried my sister away,
O crown on the world's head lying
Too high for its waters to drown,
Take yet this one word of me dying,
O city, O crown.
Though land-wind and sea-wind with mouths that blow slaughter [*Ant.*

Should gird them to battle against thee again,
New-born of the blood of a maiden thy daughter,
The rage of their breath shall be vain.
For their strength shall be quenched and made idle,
And the foam of their mouths find a bridle,
And the height of their heads bow down
At the foot of the towers of the town.
Be blest and beloved as I love thee
Of all that shall draw from thee breath;
Be thy life as the sun's is above thee;
I go to my death.

CHORUS

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind [*Str.* 1.
Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind;
Many days bring many dooms, to loose and bind;
Sweet is each in season, good the gift it brings,
Sweet as change of night and day with altering wings,
Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts night,
Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with light.
None of all is lovelier, loftier love is none, [*Ant.* 1.
Less is bride's for bridegroom, mother's less for son,
Child, than this that crowns and binds up all in one;
Love of thy sweet light, thy fostering breast and hand,
Mother Earth, and city chosen, and natural land;
Hills that bring the strong streams forth, heights of heavenlier air,
Fields aflower with winds and suns, woods with shadowing hair.
But none of the nations of men shall they liken to thee, [*Str.* 2.
Whose children true-born and the fruit of thy body are we.

The rest are thy sons but in figure, in word are thy seed;
We only the flower of thy travail, thy children indeed.
Of thy soil hast thou fashioned our limbs, of thy waters their blood,
And the life of thy springs everlasting is fount of our flood.
No wind oversea blew us hither adrift on thy shore,
None sowed us by land in thy womb that conceived us and bore.
But the stroke of the shaft of the sunlight that brought us to birth
Pierced only and quickened thy furrows to bear us, O Earth.
With the beams of his love wast thou cloven as with iron or fire,
And the life in thee yearned for his life, and grew great with desire.
And the hunger and thirst to be wounded and healed with his dart
Made fruitful the love in thy veins and the depth of thine heart.
And the showers out of heaven overflowing and liquid with love
Fulfilled thee with child of his godhead as rain from above.
Such desire had ye twain of each other, till molten in one [*Ant.* 2.
Ye might bear and beget of your bodies the fruits of the sun.
And the trees in their season brought forth and were kindled anew
By the warmth of the moisture of marriage, the child-bearing dew.
And the firstlings were fair of the wedlock of heaven and of earth;
All countries were bounteous with blossom and burgeon of birth.

Green pastures of grass for all cattle, and life-giving corn;
But here of thy bosom, here only, the man-child was born.
All races but one are as aliens engrafted or sown,
Strange children and changelings; but we, O our mother, thine own.
Thy nurslings are others, and seedlings they know not of whom;
For these hast thou fostered, but us thou hast borne in thy womb.
Who is he of us all, O beloved, that owe thee for birth,
Who would give not his blood for his birth's sake, O mother, O Earth?
What landsman is he that was fostered and reared of thine hand
Who may vaunt him as we may in death though he died for the land?
Well doth she therefore who gives thee in guerdon
The bloom of the life of thy giving; [*Epode.*
And thy body was bowed by no fruitless burden,
That bore such fruit of thee living.
For her face was not darkened for fear,
For her eyelids conceived not a tear,
Nor a cry from her lips craved pity;
But her mouth was a fountain of song,
And her heart as a citadel strong
That guards the heart of the city.

MESSENGER

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land
On brass and stone are written, and their deeds
On high days chanted; but none graven or sung

That ever set men's eyes or spirits on fire,
Athenians, has the sun's height seen, or earth
Heard in her depth reverberate as from heaven,
More worth men's praise and good report of Gods
Than here I bring for record in your ears.
For now being come to the altar, where as priest
Death ministering should meet her, and his hand
Seal her sweet eyes asleep, the maiden stood,
With light in all her face as of a bride
Smiling, or shine of festal flame by night
Far flung from towers of triumph; and her lips
Trembled with pride in pleasure, that no fear
Blanched them nor death before his time drank dry
The blood whose bloom fulfilled them; for her cheeks
Lightened, and brighter than a bridal veil
Her hair enrobed her bosom and enrolled
From face to feet the body's whole soft length
As with a cloud sun-saturate; then she spake
With maiden tongue words manlike, but her eyes
Lit mildly like a maiden's: *Countrymen,*
With more goodwill and height of happier heart
I give me to you than my mother bare,
And go more gladly this great way to death
Than young men bound to battle. Then with face
Turned to the shadowiest part of all the shrine
And eyes fast set upon the further shade,
Take me, dear Gods; and as some form had shone
From the deep hollow shadow, some God's tongue
Answered, *I bless you that your guardian grace*
Gives me to guard this country, takes my blood,
Your child's by name, to heal it. Then the priest
Set to the flower-sweet snow of her soft throat

The sheer knife's edge that severed it, and loosed
From the fair bondage of so spotless flesh
So strong a spirit; and all that girt them round
Gazing, with souls that hung on that sad stroke,
Groaned, and kept silence after while a man
Might count how far the fresh blood crept, and bathed
How deep the dark robe and the bright shrine's base
Red-rounded with a running ring that grew
More large and duskier as the wells that fed
Were drained of that pure effluence: but the queen
Groaned not nor spake nor wept, but as a dream
Floats out of eyes awakening so past forth
Ghost-like, a shadow of sorrow, from all sight
To the inner court and chamber where she sits
Dumb, till word reach her of this whole day's end.

CHORUS

More hapless born by far [*Str.*
Beneath some wintrier star,
One sits in stone among high Lydian snows,
The tomb of her own woes:
Yet happiest was once of the daughters of Gods, and divine by her sire and her lord,
Ere her tongue was a shaft for the hearts of her sons, for the heart of her husband a sword.
For she, too great of mind, [*Ant.*
Grown through her good things blind,
With godless lips and fire of her own breath
Spake all her house to death;
But thou, no mother unmothered, nor kindled in spirit with pride of thy seed,

Thou hast hallowed thy child for a blameless blood-offering,
and ransomed thy race by thy deed.

MESSENGER

As flower is graffed on flower, so grief on grief
Engraffed brings forth new blossoms of strange tears,
Fresh buds and green fruits of an alien pain;
For now flies rumour on a dark wide wing,
Murmuring of woes more than ye knew, most like
Hers whom ye hailed most wretched; for the twain
Last left of all this house that wore last night
A threefold crown of maidens, and to-day
Should let but one fall dead out of the wreath,
If mad with grief we know not and sore love
For this their sister, or with shame soul-stung
To outlive her dead or doubt lest their lives too
The Gods require to seal their country safe
And bring the oracular doom to perfect end,
Have slain themselves, and fallen at the altar-foot
Lie by their own hands done to death; and fear
Shakes all the city as winds a wintering tree,
And as dead leaves are men's hearts blown about
And shrunken with ill thoughts, and flowerless hopes
Parched up with presage, lest the piteous blood
Shed of these maidens guiltless fall and fix
On this land's forehead like a curse that cleaves
To the unclean soul's inexpiate hunted head
Whom his own crime tracks hotlier than a hound
To life's veiled end unsleeping; and this hour
Now blackens toward the battle that must close
All gates of hope and fear on all their hearts
Who tremble toward its issue, knowing not yet

If blood may buy them surety, cleanse or soil
The helpless hands men raise and reach no stay.

CHORUS

Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words; but these
The Gods turn from us that have kept their law.
Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song, [*Str.* 1.
And our souls to the height of the darkling day.
If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,
Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,
Though the prow reel round and the helm point wrong,
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.
For the steersman time sits hidden astern, [*Ant.* 1.
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades churn
The foam of our lives that to death return,
Blown back as they break to the gulfing gloom.
What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow, what sound, [*Str.* 2.
From the world beyond earth, from the night underground,
That scatters from wings unbeholden the weight of its darkness around?
For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its eye, [*Ant.* 2.
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an end be not nigh.
O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to see and to hear [*Str.* 3.
What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals mine ear?

O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not shrunk up
and withered for fear?
Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds are in quest
by day, [*Ant.* 3.
And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them crying for
their prey,
And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of his course
as a blind man astray.
From east to west of the south sea-line [*Str.* 4.
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine;
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts of the
sea
By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,
So black behind them the live storm serried
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the terror to be.
Shall the sea give death whom the land gave birth? [*Ant.* 4.
O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it, help us or hide.
As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his tide.
O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain, [*Str.* 5.
For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given us again?
O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forthfaring
ships by night,
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast of thy
breath?
A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of death,
For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father, who
finds thee against him in fight.
Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of our cry;
[*Ant.* 5.

Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war be dry;
Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foemen, the sword of their strength and the shield;
As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks of ships,
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the breath of thy lips,
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.
O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born with the day, [*Str.* 6.
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for the same wide way,
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou hast marshalled from northward for prey.
From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the mists of the fountains of night, [*Ant.* 6.
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps laughing, on fire for his flight,
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.
For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of spears begun, [*Str.* 7.
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning outlightens the sun.
From the springs of the morning it thunders and lightens across and afar
To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of the last low star.
With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earthquake of men that meet,
Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows take fire from his feet.

Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the hollows of rocks are afraid,
And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as waves in a storm-wind swayed.
From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge and the dark loud shore,
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling of wheels that roar.
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that foam as they gnash
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the poles that crash.
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of the mad steeds champ,
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's foot rings in their tramp.
For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is arrayed for the fight,
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering as clouds in the night.
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets, with darkness mine eyes,
At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens the roar of the sky's.
White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse against horse reels hurled,
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for the spoil of the world.
And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of chariots that founder on land, [*Ant.* 7.
And the horsemen are broken with breach as of breakers, and scattered as sand.

Through the roar and recoil of the charges that mingle their cries and confound,
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash through the darkness of sound.
As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways with the wind as it swells
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers that clash with their bells;
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the burst of the wave as it shocks
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar of the surge on the rocks:
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war, and their corsleted breasts,
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten the storm with their crests,
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the shipwrecking wind as they rise,
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that slays as it dies.
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the fire of their breath,
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright with the lightnings of death;
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the jaws of its gulf are as graves,
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane on the ridges of waves:
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a dewfall of blood
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the manslaying flood.

And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields of the sea by night
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day nigh dead, [*Epode.*
What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath muffled thine head?
O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off thy wrath by what name,
With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with what incense, assuage with what gift,
If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward the seaman adrift
With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen have wasted with flame?
Arise now, lift up thy light; give ear to us, put forth thine hand,
Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for the night of the land.
Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the dead;
O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our dread.
Who hath blinded thee? who hath prevailed on thee? who hath ensnared?
Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy battle prepared?
Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for thine arm that was bared?
Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might of thy master declared.
O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of day,

What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its garland away?
To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed of the light,
And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet of night?
Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and goaded their flanks with affright,
To the race of a course that we know not on ways that are hid from our sight.
As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their chariot are whirled,
And the light of its passage is night on the face of the world.
And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help from on high,
But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of thine eye.
For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water bows down and goes by,
To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us untimely to die.
But what light is it now leaps forth on the land
Enkindling the waters and ways of the air
From thy forehead made bare,
From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand?
Hast thou set not thy left hand again to the string,
With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring
And the barbed shaft drawn,
Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring
That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,
O huntsman, O king,
When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase
As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn?
He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,

And the clouds are shot through with the fires of his hands,
And the height of the hollow of heaven that he fills
As the heart of a strong man is quickened and thrills:
High over the folds of the low-lying lands,
    On the shadowless hills
  As a guard on his watchtower he stands.
All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might:
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight
Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight
  With presage of peace to come.
Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,
    That joy out of woe
May arise as the spring out of tempest and snow,
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-red
Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,
  Or the wrath of its lord have end.
  For the season is full now of death or of birth,
  To bring forth life, or an end of all;
  And we know not if anything stand or fall
  That is girdled about with the round sea's girth
      As a town with its wall;
  But thou that art highest of the Gods most high,
  That art lord if we live, that art lord though we die,
  Have heed of the tongues of our terror that cry
    For a grace to the children of Earth.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Sons of Athens, heavy-laden with the holy weight of years,
Be your hearts as young men's lightened of their loathlier load of fears;
For the wave is sunk whose thunder shoreward shook the shuddering lands,
And unbreached of warring waters Athens like a sea-rock stands.

CHORUS

Well thy word has cheered us, well thy face and glittering eyes, that spake
Ere thy tongue spake words of comfort: yet no pause behoves it make
Till the whole good hap find utterance that the Gods have given at length.

ATHENIAN HERALD

All is this, that yet the city stands unforced by stranger strength.

CHORUS

Sweeter sound might no mouth utter in man's ear than this thy word.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Feed thy soul then full of sweetness till some bitterer note be heard.

CHORUS

None, if this ring sure, can mar the music fallen from heaven as rain.

ATHENIAN HERALD

If no fire of sun or star untimely sear the tender grain.

CHORUS

Fresh the dewfall of thy tidings on our hopes reflowering lies.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Till a joyless shower and fruitless blight them, raining from thine eyes.

CHORUS

Bitter springs have barren issues; these bedew grief's arid sands.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Such thank-offerings ask such altars as expect thy suppliant hands.

CHORUS

Tears for triumph, wail for welfare, what strange godhead's shrine requires?

ATHENIAN HERALD

Death's or victory's be it, a funeral torch feeds all its festal fires.

CHORUS

Like a star should burn the beacon flaming from our city's head.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Like a balefire should the flame go up that says the king is dead.

CHORUS

Out of heaven, a wild-haired meteor, shoots this new sign, scattering fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Yea, the word has wings of fire that hovered, loth to burn thine ear.

CHORUS

From thy lips it leapt forth loosened on a shrill and shadowy wing.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Long they faltered, fain to hide it deep as death that hides the king.

CHORUS

Dead with him blind hope lies blasted by the lightning of one sword.

ATHENIAN HERALD

On thy tongue truth wars with error; no man's edge hath touched thy lord.

CHORUS

False was thine then, jangling menace like a war-steed's brow-bound bell?

ATHENIAN HERALD

False it rang not joy nor sorrow; but by no man's hand he fell.

CHORUS

Vainly then good news and evil through so faint a trumpet spake.

ATHENIAN HERALD

All too long thy soul yet labours, as who sleeping fain would wake,
Waking, fain would fall on sleep again; the woe thou knowest not yet,
When thou knowest, shall make thy memory thirst and hunger to forget.

CHORUS

Long my heart has hearkened, hanging on thy clamorous ominous cry,
Fain yet fearful of the knowledge whence it looks to live or die;
Now to take the perfect presage of thy dark and sidelong flight
Comes a surer soothsayer sorrowing, sable-stoled as birds of night.

PRAXITHEA

Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say
Speak; for no word yet wavering on thy lip
Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD

I have no will to weave too fine or far,
O queen, the weft of sweet with bitter speech,
Bright words with darkling; but the brief truth shown
Shall plead my pardon for a lingering tongue,
Loth yet to strike hope through the heart and slay.
The sun's light still was lordly housed in heaven
When the twain fronts of war encountering smote
First fire out of the battle; but not long
Had the fresh wave of windy fight begun

Heaving, and all the surge of swords to sway,
When timeless night laid hold of heaven, and took
With its great gorge the noon as in a gulf,
Strangled; and thicker than the shrill-winged shafts
Flew the fleet lightnings, held in chase through heaven
By headlong heat of thunders on their trail
Loosed as on quest of quarry; that our host
Smit with sick presage of some wrathful God
Quailed, but the foe as from one iron throat
With one great sheer sole thousand-throated cry
Shook earth, heart-staggered from their shout, and clove
The cycless hollow of heaven; and breached therewith
As with an onset of strength-shattering sound
The rent vault of the roaring noon of night
From her throned seat of usurpation rang
Reverberate answer; such response there pealed
As though the tide's charge of a storming sea
Had burst the sky's wall, and made broad a breach
In the ambient girth and bastion flanked with stars
Guarding the fortress of the Gods, and all
Crashed now together on ruin; and through that cry
And higher above it ceasing one man's note
Tore its way like a trumpet: *Charge, make end,*
Charge, halt not, strike, rend up their strength by the roots,
Strike, break them, make your birthright's promise sure,
Show your hearts hardier than the fenced land breeds
And souls breathed in you from no spirit of earth,
Sons of the sea's waves; and all ears that heard
Rang with that fiery cry, that the fine air
Thereat was fired, and kindling filled the plain
Full of that fierce and trumpet-quenching breath
That spake the clarions silent; no glad song

For folk to hear that wist how dire a God
Begat this peril to them, what strong race
Fathered the sea-born tongue that sang them death,
Threatening; so raged through the red foam of fight
Poseidon's son Eumolpus; and the war
Quailed round him coming, and our side bore back,
As a stream thwarted by the wind and sea
That meet it midway mouth to mouth, and beat
The flood back of its issue; but the king
Shouted against them, crying, *O Father-God,*
Source of the God my father, from thine hand
Send me what end seems good now in thy sight,
But death from mine to this man; and the word
Quick on his lips yet like a blast of fire
Blew them together; and round its lords that met
Paused all the reeling battle; two main waves
Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back
That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea
Charging, that full in face takes at one blow
That whole recoil and ruin, with less fear
Startle men's eyes late shipwrecked; for a breath,
Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,
Then clashed, breaker to breaker; cloud with cloud
In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth,
One fourfold flash and thunder; yet a breath,
And with the king's spear through his red heart's root
Driven, like a rock split from its hill-side, fell
Hurled under his own horsehoofs dead on earth
The sea-beast that made war on earth from sea,
Dumb, with no shrill note left of storming song,
Eumolpus; and his whole host with one stroke
Spear-stricken through its dense deep iron heart

Fell hurtling from us, and in fierce recoil
Drew seaward as with one wide wail of waves,
Resorbed with reluctation; such a groan
Rose from the fluctuant refluence of its ranks,
Sucked sullen back and strengthless; but scarce yet
The steeds had sprung and wheels had bruised their lord
Fallen, when from highest height of the sundering heaven
The Father for his brother's son's sake slain
Sent a sheer shaft of lightning writhen and smote
Right on his son's son's forehead, that unhelmed
Shone like the star that shines down storm, and gave
Light to men's eyes that saw thy lord their king
Stand and take breath from battle; then too soon
Saw sink down as a sunset in sea-mist
The high bright head that here in van of the earth
Rose like a headland, and through storm and night
Took all the sea's wrath on it; and now dead
They bring thee back by war-forsaken ways
The strength called once thy husband, the great guard
That was of all men, stay of all men's lives,
They bear him slain of no man but a God,
Godlike; and toward him dead the city's gates
Fling their arms open mother-like, through him
Saved; and the whole clear land is purged of war
What wilt thou say now of this weal and woe?

PRAXITHEA

I praise the Gods for Athens. O sweet Earth,
Mother, what joy thy soul has of thy son,
Thy life of my dead lord, mine own soul knows
That knows thee godlike; and what grief should mine,
What sorrow should my heart have, who behold

Thee made so heavenlike happy? This alone
I only of all these blessed, all thy kind,
Crave this for blessing to me, that in theirs
Have but a part thus bitter; give me too
Death, and the sight of eyes that meet not mine.
And thee too from no godless heart or tongue
Reproachful, thee too by thy living name,
Father divine, merciful God, I call,
Spring of my life springs, fountain of my stream,
Pure and poured forth to one great end with thine,
Sweet head sublime of triumph and these tears,
Cephisus, if thou seest as gladly shed
Thy blood in mine as thine own waves are given
To do this great land good, to give for love
The same lips drink and comfort the same hearts,
Do thou then, O my father, white-souled God,
To thy most pure earth-hallowing heart eterne
Take what thou gavest to be given for these,
Take thy child to thee; for her time is full,
For all she hath borne she hath given, seen all she had
Flow from her, from her eyes and breasts and hands
Flow forth to feed this people; but be thou,
Dear God and gracious to all souls alive,
Good to thine own seed also; let me sleep,
Father; my sleepless darkling day is done,
My day of life like night, but slumberless:
For all my fresh fair springs, and his that ran
In one stream's bed with mine, are all run out
Into the deep of death. The Gods have saved
Athens; my blood has bought her at their hand,
And ye sit safe; be glorious and be glad
As now for all time always, countrymen,

And love my dead for ever; but me, me,
What shall man give for these so good as death?

CHORUS

From the cup of my heart I pour through my lips along [*Str.* 1.
The mingled wine of a joyful and sorrowful song;
Wine sweeter than honey and bitterer than blood that is poured
From the chalice of gold, from the point of the two-edged sword.
For the city redeemed should joy flow forth as a flood,
And a dirge make moan for the city polluted with blood.
Great praise should the Gods have surely, my country, of thee, [*Ant.* 1.
Were thy brow but as white as of old for thy sons to see,
Were thy hands as bloodless, as blameless thy cheek divine;
But a stain on it stands of the life-blood offered for thine.
What thanks shall we give that are mixed not and marred with dread
For the price that has ransomed thine own with thine own child's head?
For a taint there cleaves to the people redeemed with blood, [*Str.* 2.
And a plague to the blood-red hand.
The rain shall not cleanse it, the dew nor the sacred flood
That blesses the glad live land.
In the darkness of earth beneath, in the world without sun, [*Ant.* 2.
The shadows of past things reign;
And a cry goes up from the ghost of an ill deed done,
And a curse for a virgin slain.

ATHENA

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,
Hearken; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou
Dumb-stricken for thy children; hear ye too,
Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,
Late wroth, now full of quiet; hear thou, sun,
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven
And all the stars returning; hills and streams,
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,
Night that shalt hide not; and thou child of mine,
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent blood,
City mine own; I Pallas bring thee word,
I virgin daughter of the most high God
Give all you charge and lay command on all
The word I bring be wasted not; for this
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,
That time nor earth nor changing sons of man
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see
So great a light alive beneath the sun
As the awless eye of Athens; all fame else
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep
To this wide noon at waking; men most praised
In lands most happy for their children found
Shall hold as highest of honours given of God
To be but likened to the least of thine,
Thy least of all, my city; thine shall be
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done

Thine the full flower for all time; in thine hand
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head
Wear worship for a garland; nor one leaf
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown
Till all flowers wither in the world; thine eyes
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty,
Thy tongue shall first say freedom; thy first hand
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun
Kings that rose up out of the populous east
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make
With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks
Ill shepherded from Asia; by thy side
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine
To hold faith fast for aye; with thee, though each
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea
Full in their face of battle, and become
A laughter to thee; like a shower of leaves
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath

Swept out of sight of being; so great a grace
Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,
Dead man with dead; such only names as these
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less
To hold of men in honour; but with me
Shall these be worshipped as one God, and mix
With mine the might of their mysterious names
In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep
Perpetual guard on Athens; time and change,
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made
To thee that knowest no master and no lord
Servants; the days that lighten heaven and nights
That darken shall be ministers of thine
To attend upon thy glory, the great years
As light-engraven letters of thy name
Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth
For world-beholden witness; such a gift
For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed
To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,
And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand
To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,
Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn
And laid him low that planted, give thee back
In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea
And heavenlike earth with heaven; such promise-pledge
I daughter without mother born of God
To the most woful mother born of man
Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live
Beyond all human hap of mortal doom
Happy; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

PRAXITHEA

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole
Take as thou givest us blessing; never tear
Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song
That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings
Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil
The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief
Great as the joy to be made one in will
With him that is the heart and rule of life
And thee, God born of God; thy name is ours,
And thy large grace more great than our desire.

CHORUS

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain is poured
of thanksgiving,
My country, my mother, for thee,
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy sight and
a name everliving
At heart of thy people to be.
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they shall turn
from afar
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of these pyres
for a star.
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who hate thee
shall see and take warning,
Our mother that makest us free;
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the waves that
made war on their morning,
And friendship and fame of the sea.

MARY STUART

A TRAGEDY

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
γλῶσσα τελείσθω· τοὐφειλόμενον
πράσσουσα δίκη μέγ' ἀϋτεῖ·
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν
πληγὴν τινέτω· δράσαντι παθεῖν,
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 309–315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY
WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:
TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER
VICTOR HUGO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.
MARY BEATON.
QUEEN ELIZABETH.
BARBARA MOWBRAY.
LORD BURGHLEY.
SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.
WILLIAM DAVISON.
ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
EARL OF KENT.
HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*
SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.
SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*
POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*
EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*
GAWDY, *The Queen's Sergeant.*
SIR AMYAS PAULET.
SIR DREW DRURY.
SIR THOMAS GORGES.
SIR WILLIAM WADE.
SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.
ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*
CURLE *and* NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*
GORION, *her Apothecary.*

FATHER JOHN BALLARD,
ANTHONY BABINGTON,
CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE,
JOHN SAVAGE,
CHARLES TILNEY,
EDWARD ABINGTON,
THOMAS SALISBURY,
ROBERT BARNWELL,
} *Conspirators.*

THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to* WALSINGHAM.
M. DE CHÂTEAUNEUF.
M. DE BELLIÈVRE.

Commissioners, Privy Councillors, Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers, and Attendants.

Time — FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.

MARY STUART

Act I

ANTHONY BABINGTON

Scene I. — *Babington's Lodging: a veiled picture on the wall.*

Enter Babington, Tichborne, Tilney, Abington, Salisbury, and Barnwell.

Babington. Welcome, good friends, and welcome this good day
That casts out hope and brings in certainty
To turn raw spring to summer. Not now long
The flower that crowns the front of all our faiths
Shall bleach to death in prison; now the trust
That took the night with fire as of a star
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight
Who held it dear and desperate once, now sure,
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand
I hold this England and her brood, and all
That time out of the chance of all her fate
Makes hopeful or makes fearful: days and years,
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or shame
From the unborn womb of these unknown, are ours
That stand yet noteless here; ours even as God's
Who puts them in our hand as his, to wield
And shape to service godlike. None of you
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death

And writes apart immortal; what we would,
That have we; what our fathers, brethren, peers,
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win,
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,
May take to bind our brows with. By my life,
I think none ever had such hap alive
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set
The whole good hap and evil of the state
And of the Church of God and world of men
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that hang
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear
What sons to time it please us; whose mere will
Is father of the future.

Tilney. Have you said?

Bab. I cannot say too much of so much good.

Til. Say nothing then a little, and hear one while:
Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for joy,
And safely may perchance, or may not, here;
But why to-day we know not.

Bab. No, I swear,
Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,
No man on earth; one woman knows, and I,
I that best know her the best begot of man
And noblest; no king born so kingly-souled,
Nor served of such brave servants.

Tichborne. What, as we?

Bab. Is there one vein in one of all our hearts
That is not blown aflame as fire with air
With even the thought to serve her? and, by God,
They that would serve had need be bolder found
Than common kings find servants.

Salisbury. Well, your cause?
What need or hope has this day's heat brought forth
To blow such fire up in you?
Bab. Hark you, sirs;
The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,
To set again the seal on our past oaths
And bind their trothplight faster than it is
With one more witness; not for shameful doubt,
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,
Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn to mine,
Friends that have taken on your hearts and hands
The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,
Look on this picture; from its face to-day
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare
Its likeness and our purpose. Ay, look here;
None of these faces but are friends of each,
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye not
What these have bound their souls to? and myself,
I that stand midmost painted here of all,
Have I not right to wear of all this ring
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I
Should crown and close this goodly circle up
Of friends I call my followers? There ye stand,
Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,
Just your own shapes, even all the man but speech,
As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye
That burns with red remembrance of the blood
Seen drenching those green fields turned brown and grey

Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the sword
That hews the boughs off lop the root there set
To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take heed;
These are not met for nothing here in show
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful heart
To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and wear
The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned
Before their hands have wrought it for their heads
Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds done
In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,
And desperate each as other; but that each,
Seeing here himself and knowing why here, may set
His whole heart's might on the instant work, and hence
Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew
And swordlike tempered from the touch that turns
Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel
Made keen as fire by water; so, I say,
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with hands
Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,
Quicken with life your vows and purposes
To rid the beast that troubles all the world
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not sworn
Or stand not ready girt at perilous need
To strike under the cloth of state itself
The very heart we hunt for?

Tich. Let not then
Too high a noise of hound and horn give note
How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot

Startle the royal quarry; lest your cry
Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we
More piteously be rent of our own hounds
Than he that went forth huntsman too, and came
To play the hart he hunted.
Bab. Ay, but, see,
Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,
If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh
Was charmed out of a man and bayed to death
But through pure anger of a perfect maid;
For she that should of huntsmen turn us harts
Is Dian but in mouths of her own knaves,
And in paid eyes hath only godhead on
And light to dazzle none but them to death.
Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim
As goddess-like as maiden.
Barnwell. Why, myself
Was late at court in presence, and her eyes
Fixed somewhile on me full in face; yet, 'faith,
I felt for that no lightning in my blood
Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon
To blind their balls with godhead; no, ye see,
I walk yet well enough.
Abington. She gazed at you?
Barn. Yes, 'faith; yea, surely; take a Puritan oath
To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God help,
Are not mine eyes yet whole then? am I blind
Or maimed or scorched, and know not? by my head,
I find it sit yet none the worse for fear
To be so thunder-blasted.
Abing. Hear you, sirs?
Tich. I was not fain to hear it.

Barn. Which was he
Spake of one changed into a hart? by God,
There be some hearts here need no charm, I think,
To turn them hares of hunters; or if deer,
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.
Bab. Peace, man, peace!
Let not at least this noble cry of hounds
Flash fangs against each other. See what verse
I bade write under on the picture here:
These are my comrades, whom the peril's self
Draws to it; how say you? will not all in the end
Prove fellows to me? how should one fall off
Whom danger lures and scares not? Tush, take hands;
It was to keep them fast in all time's sight
I bade my painter set you here, and me
Your loving captain; gave him sight of each
And order of us all in amity.
And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth
Taking out a letter.
To what a work we are bound to, even her hand
Whom we must bring from bondage, and again
Be brought of her to honour. This is she,
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,
Am I more worth or Ballard?
Til. He it was
Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all
That should be practised; he is wise.
Bab. Ay, wise!
He was in peril too, he said, God wot,

And must have surety of her, he; but I,
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,
See all here else, her trust and her good love
Who knows mine own heart of mine own hand writ
And sent her for assurance.
Sal. This we know;
What we would yet have certified of you
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.
Bab. I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you, first
She writes me what good comfort hath she had
To know by letter mine estate, and thus
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,
As grief was hers to live without the same
This great while past; then lovingly commends
In me her own desire to avert betimes
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith
With ruin of us all; for so she hath shown
All Catholic princes what long since they have wrought
Against the king of Spain; and all this while
The Catholics naked here to all misuse
Fall off in numbered force, in means and power,
And if we look not to it shall soon lack strength
To rise and take that hope or help by the hand
Which time shall offer them; and see for this
What heart is hers! she bids you know of me
Though she were no part of this cause, who holds
Worthless her own weighed with the general weal,
She will be still most willing to this end
To employ therein her life and all she hath
Or in this world may look for.
Tich. This rings well;

But by what present mean prepared doth hers
Confirm your counsel? or what way set forth
So to prevent our enemies with good speed
That at the goal we find them not, and there
Fall as men broken?

Bab. Nay, what think you, man,
Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack
Herein her counsel? hath she not been found
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,
Man-hearted ever? First, for crown and base
Of all this enterprise, she bids me here
Examine with good heed of good event
What power of horse and foot among us all
We may well muster, and in every shire
Choose out what captain for them, if we lack
For the main host a general; — as indeed
Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds
Or here with you cut off the heretic queen
Could take not this on me; — what havens, towns,
What ports to north and west and south, may we
Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand
For entrance and receipt of help from France,
From Spain, or the Low Countries; in what place
Draw our main head together; for how long
Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends
Wage and munition, or what harbours choose
For these to land; or what provision crave
Of coin at need or armour; by what means
The six her friends deliberate to proceed;
And last the manner how to get her forth
From this last hold wherein she newly lies:

These heads hath she set down, and bids me take
Of all seven points counsel and common care
With as few friends as may be of the chief
Ranged on our part for actors; and thereon
Of all devised with diligent speed despatch
Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,
Who to the experience past of all the estate
Here on this side aforetime that he hath
Shall join goodwill to serve us.
Til. Ay, no more?
Of us no more I mean, who being most near
To the English queen our natural mistress born
Take on our hands, her household pensioners',
The stain and chiefest peril of her blood
Shed by close violence under trust; no word,
No care shown further of our enterprise
That flowers to fruit for her sake?
Bab. Fear not that;
Abide till we draw thither — ay — she bids
Get first assurance of such help to come,
And take thereafter, what before were vain,
Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,
Wherewith to march at word from every shire
Given by the chief; and save these principals
Let no man's knowledge less in place partake
The privy ground we move on, but set forth
For entertainment of the meaner ear
We do but fortify us against the plot
Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm
That have their general force now drawn to head
In the Low Countries, whence being home returned
They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp

Not from her only and all else lawful heirs
The kingly power, but from their queen that is
(As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)
Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear
Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom
Catch like infection from plague-tainted air
The purulence of their purity; with which plea
We so may stablish our confederacies
As wrought but for defence of lands, lives, goods,
From them that would cut off our faith and these;
No word writ straight or given directly forth
Against the queen, but rather showing our will
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,
Myself she saith *not named.* Ha, gallant souls,
Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,
No brain to help her heart with?

Tich. But our end —

No word of this yet?

Bab. And a good word, here,
And worth our note, good friend; being thus prepared,
Time then shall be to set our hands on work
And straight thereon take order that she may
Be suddenly transported out of guard,
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,
Which then must make the hotter haste; and seeing
We can make no day sure for our design
Nor certain hour appointed when she might
Find other friends at hand on spur of the act
To take her forth of prison, ye should have
About you always, or in court at least,
Scouts furnished well with horses of good speed
To bear the tiding to her and them whose charge

Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these
May be about her ere her keeper have word
What deed is freshly done; in any case,
Ere he can make him strong within the house
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were
By divers ways to send forth two or three
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need
To cut the common posts off; by this plot
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,
As they that laboured heretofore herein,
Through overhaste to stir upon this side
Ere surety make us strong of strangers' aid.
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,
Be well assured, she bids us — as I think
She doubts not me that I should let this slip,
Forget so main a matter — well assured
To set her in the heart of some strong host,
Or strength of some good hold, where she may stay
Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in;
For should the queen, being scatheless of us yet
As we unready, fall upon her flight,
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare
Should find being caught again a narrower hold
Whence she should fly forth never, if cause indeed
Should seem not given to use her worse; and we
Should be with all extremity pursued,
To her more grief; for this should grieve her more
Than what might heaviest fall upon her.

Til. Ay?

She hath had then work enough to do to weep
For them that bled before; Northumberland,

The choice of all the north spoiled, banished, slain,
Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth sad time
The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up
So many an eye from sunlight.
Bab. By my head,
Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear
There is none worth more than a tear of hers
That man wears living or that man might lose,
Borne upright in the sun, or for her sake
Bowed down by theirs she weeps for: nay, but hear;
She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all
May prosperously find end assured, and you
Conclude with me in judgment; to myself
As chief of trust in my particular
Refers you for assurance, and commends
To counsel seasonable and time's advice
Your common resolution; and again,
If the design take yet not hold, as chance
For all our will may turn it, we should not
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else
Of our so baffled enterprise; but say
When this were done we might not come at her
Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she saith,
For God's sake leave not to proceed herein
To the utmost undertaking; for herself
At any time shall most contentedly
Die, knowing of our deliverance from the bonds
Wherein as slaves we are holden.
Barn. So shall I,
Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement

Whose life were worth the whole blood shed o' the world
And all men's hearts made empty.
Bab. Ay, good friend,
Here speaks she of your fellows, that some stir
Might be in Ireland laboured to begin
Some time ere we take aught on us, that thence
The alarm might spring right on the part opposed
To where should grow the danger: she meantime
Should while the work were even in hand assay
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise
And put her son into their hands, that so
No help may serve our enemies thence; again,
That from our plots the stroke may come, she thinks
To have some chief or general head of all
Were now most apt for the instant end; wherein
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet
Conceive not how to send the appointed word
To the Earl of Arundel now fast in bonds
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now
Would have us give him careful note of this,
Him or his brethren; and from oversea
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,
To the young son of dead Northumberland,
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name, we know,
May do much northward; ay, but this we know,
How much his hand was lesser than his name
When proof was put on either; and the lord
Paget, whose power is in some shires of weight
To incline them usward; both may now be had,
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,
If the enterprise be resolute once, with these
May come back darkling; Paget lies in Spain,

Whom we may treat with by bis brother's mean,
Charles, who keeps watch in Paris: then in the end
She bids beware no messenger sent forth
That bears our counsel bear our letters; these
Must through blind hands precede them or ensue
By ignorant posts and severally despatched;
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,
— But that I think she fears not — bids take heed
Of spies among us and false brethren, chief
Of priests already practised on, she saith,
By the enemy's craft against us; what, forsooth,
We have not eyes to set such knaves apart
And look their wiles through, but should need misdoubt
— Whom shall I say the least on all our side? —
Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face
That fear's lean self could fear not? but God knows
Woman is wise, but woman; none so bold,
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it; why,
She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep
That I should never bear about me, seeing
By that fault sank all they that fell before
Who should have walked unwounded else of proof,
Unstayed of justice: but this following word
Hath savour of more judgment; we should let
As little as we may our names be known
Or purpose here to the envoy sent from France,
Whom though she hears for honest, we must fear
His master holds the course of his design
Far contrary to this of ours, which known
Might move him to discovery.

Tich. Well forewarned:

Forearmed enough were now that cause at need
Which had but half so good an armour on
To fight false faith or France in.
Bab. Peace awhile;
Here she winds up her craft. She hath long time sued
To shift her lodging, and for answer hath
None but the Castle of Dudley named as meet
To serve this turn; and thither may depart,
She thinks, with parting summer; whence may we
Devise what means about those lands to lay
For her deliverance; who from present bonds
May but by one of three ways be discharged:
When she shall ride forth on the moors that part
Her prison-place from Stafford, where few folk
Use to pass over, on the same day set,
With fifty or threescore men well horsed and armed,
To take her from her keeper's charge, who rides
With but some score that bear but pistols; next,
To come by deep night round the darkling house
And fire the barns and stables, which being nigh
Shall draw the household huddling forth to help,
And they that come to serve her, wearing each
A secret sign for note and cognizance,
May some of them surprise the house, whom she
Shall with her servants meet and second; last,
When carts come in at morning, these being met
In the main gateway's midst may by device
Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we
Make in thereon and suddenly possess
The house whence lightly might we bear her forth
Ere help came in of soldiers to relief
Who lie a mile or half a mile away

In several lodgings: but howe'er this end
She holds her bounden to me all her days
Who proffer me to hazard for her love,
And doubtless shall as well esteem of you
Or scarce less honourably, when she shall know
Your names who serve beneath me; so commends
Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word
That I would wear at heart for ever; yet,
Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,
Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus
Rend mine own heart with her sweet name, and end.
Tears the letter.

Sal. She hath chosen a trusty servant.

Bab. Ay, of me?
What ails you at her choice? was this not I
That laid the ground of all this work, and wrought
Your hearts to shape for service? or perchance
The man was you that took this first on him,
To serve her dying and living, and put on
The blood-red name of traitor and the deed
Found for her sake not murderous?

Sal. Why, they say
First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,
Whom he brought over to redeem your heart
Half lost for doubt already, and refresh
The flagging flame that fired it first, and now
Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath
Hardly with hard pains quickened it and blew
The grey to red rekindling.

Bab. Sir, they lie
Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart
For doubt to lose life after; let such know

It shames me not though I were slow of will
To take such work upon my soul and hand
As killing of a queen; being once assured,
Brought once past question, set beyond men's doubts
By witness of God's will borne sensibly,
Meseems I have swerved not.
Sal. Ay, when once the word
Was washed in holy water, you would wear
Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips
That men spell murderer; but till Ballard spake
The shadow of her slaying whom we shall strike
Was ice to freeze your purpose.
Tich. Friend, what then?
Is this so small a thing, being English born,
To strike the living empire here at heart
That is called England? stab her present state,
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,
With hands that smite a woman? I that speak,
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, and will
To do faith's bidding; yet it wrings not me
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,
Though moved perforce of will unwillingly,
To take in trust this charge upon me.
Barn. I
With all goodwill would take, and give God thanks,
The charge of all that falter in it: by heaven,
To hear in the end of doubts and doublings heaves
My heart up as with sickness. Why, by this
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope
Should be made carrion, with those following four
That were to wait upon her dead: all five
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we prate

And threaten here in painting: by my life,
I see no more in us of life or heart
Than in this heartless picture.
Bab. Peace again;
Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours
Much longer keep it; Burghley, Walsingham,
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names writ out,
With hers at head they worship, are but now
As those five several letters that spell death
In eyes that read them right. Give me but faith
A little longer: trust that heart awhile
Which laid the ground of all our glories; think
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in France,
By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake
On charge of such a deed's device as ours
Commended to her for trustiest, and a man
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit
To bear the burden of her counsels — I
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,
That ye should likewise trust me; seeing at first
She writes me but a thankful word, and this,
God wot, for little service; I return
For aptest answer and thankworthiest need
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she
With such large heart of trust and liberal faith
As here ye have heard requites me: whom, I think,
For you to trust is no too great thing now
For me to ask and have of all.
Tich. Dear friend,
Mistrust has no part in our mind of you
More than in hers; yet she too bids take heed,

As I would bid you take, and let not slip
The least of her good counsels, which to keep
No whit proclaims us colder than herself
Who gives us charge to keep them; and to slight
No whit proclaims us less unserviceable
Who are found too hot to serve her than the slave
Who for cold heart and fear might fail.
Bab. Too hot!
Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or blood
To give for such good service? Look you, sirs,
This is no new thing for my faith to keep,
My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope
Fix eyes upon for star to steer by; she
That six years hence the boy that I was then,
And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his faith
To serve and worship with his body and soul
For only lady and queen, with power alone
To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes
At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,
Made thence her man for ever; she whose look
Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,
That going or coming, sad or glad — for yet
She would be somewhile merry, as though to give
Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then
Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,
Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in bonds
That if too late set free would die for fear,
Or wild birds hunt it out of life — if sad,
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,
If joyous, for her very love's sake — still
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,

Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose change
Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven;
She is well content, — ye have heard her — she, to die,
If we without her may redeem ourselves
And loose our lives from bondage; but her friends
Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,
Too hot of heart to serve her! And for me,
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke
That your deep counsel must have care to keep
My lightness safe in wardship? I sought none —
Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my plot,
Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself
For scout and spy on mine own friends in France
To fill his wise wide ears with large report
Of all things wrought there on our side, and plots
Laid for our queen's sake? and for all his wit
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom ye
Hold yet too light and lean of wit to pass
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them all.

Tich. That would I know; for if they be not blind,
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing
More than they let your own eyes find or fear,
Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all
Masked in them with false blindness.

Bab. Hear you, sirs?
Now by the faith I had in this my friend
And by mine own yet flawless toward him, yea
By all true love and trust that holds men fast,

It shames me that I held him in this cause
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go;
Let us not hold you; sir, be quit of us;
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks; lie close,
Keep your head warm and covered; nay, be wise;
We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,
No married man's who being bid forth to fight
Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man
Than theirs who put on iron: I did know it,
Albeit I would not know; this man that was,
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's through
Have charmed to deathward, and in steel's good stead
Left him a silken spirit.
Tich. By that faith
Which yet I think you have found as fast in me
As ever yours I found, you wrong me more
Than were I that your words can make me not
I had wronged myself and all our cause; I hold
No whit less dear for love's sake even than love
Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my days
Was only dear to my desire, till now
This new thing dear as all these only were
Made all these dearer. If my love be less
Toward you, toward honour or this cause, then think
I love my wife not either, whom you know
How close at heart I cherish, but in all
Play false alike. Lead now which way you will,
And wear what likeness; though to all men else
It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to me,
And danger be not dangerous; where you go,

For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart
Will I take count of life and death, and think
No thought against your counsel: yea, by heaven,
I had rather follow and trust my friend and die
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind
To live of him mistrusted.
Bab. Why, well said:
Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not find
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see
The state high-builded here of heretic hope
Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more proof
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome, sirs;

Enter Ballard, disguised, and Savage.

Good father captain, come you plumed or cowled,
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand
The true heart bids you welcome.
Ballard. Sir, at none
Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.
Nay, stare not on me stormily; I say,
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope
For them that serve her, I, but take of men
Things ill done ill at any hand alike.
Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,
Nor would, though nought more dangerous than your death
Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours
Were here to stand the chance of, and your blood

Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow
Should be not poison for men's hopes to drink.
What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,
Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in
Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and ears,
How fare upon their talking tongues, how dwell
In shot of their suspicion, and sustain
How great a work how lightly? Think ye not
These men have ears and eyes about your ways,
Walk with your feet, work with your hands, and watch
When ye sleep sound and babble in your sleep?
What knave was he, or whose man sworn and spy,
That drank with you last night? whose hireling lip
Was this that pledged you, Master Babington,
To a foul queen's downfall and a fair queen's rise?
Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern speech,
Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,
Nor think who set that watch upon your lips
Yourselves can keep not on them?

Bab. What, my friends!

Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,
That bears commission to rebuke us all.
Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment, you
That take our doom upon your double tongue
To sentence and accuse us with one breath,
Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,
Good Captain Ballard, Father Fortescue,
Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave
Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet
Were never taxed of change or doubted? You,
'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note

What time we keep, what place, what company,
How far may wisdom trust us to be wise
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and eye
That waited on this very Walsingham
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood
Whose trust had sealed you trusty? By God's light,
A goodly guard I have of you, to crave
What man was he I drank with yesternight,
What name, what shape, what habit, as, forsooth,
Were I some statesman's knave and spotted spy,
The man I served, and cared not how, being dead,
His molten gold should glut my throat in hell,
Might question of me whom I snared last night,
Make inquisition of his face, his gait,
His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered then;
By God, I know not; but God knows I think
The spy most dangerous on my secret walks
And witness of my ways most worth my fear
And deadliest listener to devour my speech
Now questions me of danger, and the tongue
Most like to sting my trust and life to death
Now taxes mine of rashness.

Bal. Is he mad?
Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine
That stand and hear him rage like men in storms
Made drunk with danger? have ye sworn with him
To die the fool's death too of furious fear
And passion scared to slaughter of itself?
Is there none here that knows his cause or me,
Nor what should save or spoil us?

Tich. Friend, give ear;

For God's sake, yet be counselled.
Bab. Ay, for God's!
What part hath God in this man's counsels? nay,
Take you part with him; nay, in God's name go;
What should you do to bide with me? turn back;
There stands your captain.
Savage. Hath not one man here
One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of shame?
I that looked once for no such fellowship,
But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,
I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling tongues
Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me, sirs;
My hand keeps time before my tongue, and hath
But wit to speak in iron; yet as now
Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn
That keenest tongues may serve not. One thing sworn
Calls on our hearts; the queen must singly die,
Or we, half dead men now with dallying, must
Die several deaths for her brief one, and stretched
Beyond the scope of sufferance; wherefore here
Choose out the man to put this peril on
And gird him with this glory; let him pass
Straight hence to court, and through all stays of state
Strike death into her heart.
Bab. Why, this rings right;
Well said, and soldierlike; do thus, and take
The vanguard of us all for honour.
Sav. Ay,
Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit
Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,
The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back
From passage to her presence.

Bab. O, for that,
Take this and buy; nay, start not from your word;
You shall not.
Sav. Sir, I shall not.
Bab. Here's more gold;
Make haste, and God go with you; if the plot
Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,
We are dead, and all die bootless deaths — be swift —
And her we have served we shall but surely slay.
I will make trial again of Walsingham
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword —
Knocking within.
I will go forth myself. What noise is that?
Get you to Gage's lodging; stay not here;
Make speed without for Westminster; perchance
There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,
If the end be come upon us.
Bal. It is here.
Death knocks at door already. Fly; farewell.
Bab. I would not leave you — but they know you not —
You need not fear, being found here singly.
Bal. No.
Bab. Nay, halt not, sirs; no word but haste; this way,
Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well!
Exeunt all but Ballard. As they go out, enter an Officer with Soldiers.
Officer. Here's one fox yet by the foot; lay hold on him.
Bal. What would you, sirs?
Off. Why, make one foul bird fast,
Though the full flight be scattered: for their kind

Must prey not here again, nor here put on
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's
To mock the blear-eyed marksman: these plucked off
Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.
Bal. I am a soldier.
Off. Ay, the badge we know
Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file
That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast:
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here
So seemly set with silver buttons, all
As here was down in order; by my faith,
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid
As ever kissed for penance: pity 'tis
The hangman's hands must hallow him again
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence. *Exeunt.*

Scene II. — *Chartley.*

Mary Stuart and Mary Beaton.

Mary Stuart. We shall not need keep house for fear to-day;
The skies are fair and hot; the wind sits well
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.
Mary Beaton. How far from this to Tixall?
Mary Stuart. Nine or ten
Or what miles more I care not; we shall find
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,

Protesting yesternight the shire had none
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,
I take such pleasure yet to back my steed
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,
I am almost half content — and yet I lie —
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.
Mary Beaton. Nay,
You grew long since more patient.
Mary Stuart. Ah, God help!
What should I do but learn the word of him
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,
That ever I loved least of all sad words?
The last is death for any soul to learn,
The last save death is patience.
Mary Beaton. Time enough
We have had ere death of life to learn it in
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs
That drive the dun deer to his death.
Mary Stuart. Eighteen —
How many more years yet shall God mete out
For thee and me to wait upon their will
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream
Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,
Than half these years that all have less of life
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,
Some nine or ten; but if I die this year
And she some score years longer than I think
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine
I shall have lived the longer life, and die
The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou mind

The letter that I writ nigh two years gone
To let her wit what privacies of hers
Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue made mine
Ere it took fire to sting her lord and me?
How thick soe'er o'erscurfed with poisonous lies
Of her I am sure it lied not; and perchance
I did the wiselier, having writ my fill,
Yet to withhold the letter when she sought
Of me to know what villainies had it poured
In ears of mine against her innocent name:
And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart was mine
To write her word of these, that had she read
Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,
Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,
How say'st thou? did I well?

Mary Beaton. Ay, surely well
To keep that back you did not ill to write.

Mary Stuart. I think so, and again I think not; yet
The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,
That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath
Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,
And all the mortal medicines of the world
To drug her speech with poison; and God wot
Her daughter's child here that I bred and loved,
Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,
Keeps too much savour of her grandam's stock
For me to match with Nau; my secretary
Shall with no slip of hers engraft his own,
Begetting shame or peril to us all
From her false blood and fiery tongue; except
I find a mate as meet to match with him
For truth to me as Gilbert Curle hath found,

I will play Tudor once and break the banns,
Put on the feature of Elizabeth
To frown their hands in sunder.
Mary Beaton. Were it not
Some tyranny to take her likeness on
And bitter-hearted grudge of matrimony
For one and not his brother secretary,
Forbid your Frenchman's banns for jealousy
And grace your English with such liberal love
As Barbara fails not yet to find of you
Since she writ Curle for Mowbray? and herein
There shows no touch of Tudor in your mood
More than its wont is; which indeed is nought;
The world, they say, for her should waste, ere man
Should get her virginal goodwill to wed.
Mary Stuart. I would not be so tempered of my blood,
So much mismade as she in spirit and flesh,
To be more fair of fortune. She should hate
Not me, albeit she hate me deadly, more
Than thee or any woman. By my faith,
Fain would I know, what knowing not of her now
I muse upon and marvel, if she have
Desire or pulse or passion of true heart
Fed full from natural veins, or be indeed
All bare and barren all as dead men's bones
Of all sweet nature and sharp seed of love,
And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears
That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind
To make good days and evil, all in her
Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.
I have found no great good hap in all my days
Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,

Yet have I had and lacked not of my life
My good things and mine evil: being not yet
Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good
Foredoomed for man and woman through the world
Till all their works be nothing: and of mine
I know but this — though I should die to-day,
I would not take for mine her fortune.
Mary Beaton. No?
Myself perchance I would not.
Mary Stuart. Dost thou think
That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake once truth
Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales
Of our dear sister that at her desire
I writ to give her word of, and at thine
Withheld and put the letter in thine hand
To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,
How loud she lied soever in the charge
That for adultery taxed me with her lord
And being disproved before the council here
Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie
Her and her sons by that first lord of four
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife
And got her kind upon her, yet in this
I do believe she lied not more than I
Reporting her by record, how she said
What infinite times had Leicester and his queen
Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love
That being contracted privily they might,
With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire
This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man break,
Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb
Had sealed it on her body, man by man

Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest
Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,
That men took shame and laughed and marvelled; one,
Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace
And turn perforce from cover, that himself
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye
Was even constrained to play the piteous hare
And wind and double till her amorous chase
Were blind with speed and breathless; but the worst
Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's
Our huntress Dian could not be content
With Hatton and another born her man
And subject of this kingdom, but to heap
The heavier scandal on her countrymen
Had cast the wild growth of her lust away
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights
Within her woman's chamber would she seek
To kiss and play for shame with secretly;
And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,
That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man
Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt
As with this knave his follower; for by night
She met him coming at her chamber door
In her bare smock and night-rail, and thereon
Bade him come in; who there abode three hours:
But fools were they that thought to bind her will
And stay with one man or allay the mood
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats
To hunt fresh trails of lusty love; all this,
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,
With much more villainous else: she prayed me write

That she might know the natural spirit and mind
Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth
Then bayed my name, as now being great with child
By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay
As here in Paulet's; so being moved I wrote,
And yet I would she had read it, though not now
Would I re-write each word again, albeit
I might, or thou, were I so minded, or
Thyself so moved to bear such witness; but
'Tis well we know not how she had borne to read
All this and more, what counsel gave the dame,
With loud excess of laughter urging me
To enter on those lists of love-making
My son for suitor to her, who thereby
Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight;
And I replying that such a thing could be
But held a very mockery, she returns,
The queen was so infatuate and distraught
With high conceit of her fair fretted face
As of a heavenly goddess, that herself
Would take it on her head with no great pains
To bring her to believe it easily;
Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues
She thought they mocked her not nor lied who said
They might not sometimes look her full in face
For the light glittering from it as the sun;
And so perforce must all her women say
And she herself that spake, who durst not look
For fear to laugh out each in other's face
Even while they fooled and fed her vein with words,
Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to her
And set their feature fast as in a frame

To keep grave countenance with gross mockery lined;
And how she prayed me chide her daughter, whom
She might by no means move to take this way,
And for her daughter Talbot was assured
She could not ever choose but laugh outright
Even in the good queen's flattered face. God wot,
Had she read all, and in my hand set down,
I could not blame her though she had sought to take
My head for payment; no less poise on earth
Had served, and hardly, for the writer's fee;
I could not much have blamed her; all the less,
That I did take this, though from slanderous lips,
For gospel and not slander, and that now
I yet do well believe it.

Mary Beaton. And herself
Had well believed so much, and surely seen,
For all your protest of discredit made
With God to witness that you could not take
Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet
You meant not she should take your word for this,
As well I think she would not.

Mary Stuart. Haply, no.
We do protest not thus to be believed.
And yet the witch in one thing seven years since
Belied her, saying she then must needs die soon
For timeless fault of nature. Now belike
The soothsaying that speaks short her span to be
May prove more true of presage.

Mary Beaton. Have you hope
The chase to-day may serve our further ends
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

Mary Stuart. I see not but I may; the hour is full

Which I was bidden expect of them to bear
More fruit than grows of promise; Babington
Should tarry now not long; from France our friends
Lift up their heads to usward, and await
What comfort may confirm them from our part
Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,
Speech and desire toward action; all the shires
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed
And hope more imminent now of help to come
And work to do than ever; not this time
We hang on trust in succour that comes short
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain
That was to set me free, but might not seal
The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope
Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed
And promise with performance; Parma stands
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place
More like to avail us, and in happier time
To do like service; for my cousin of Guise,
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,
If not to bend and shape him for our use,
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart
Our forward undertaking till its force
Discharge itself on England: from no side

I see the shade of any fear to fail
As those before so baffled; heart and hand
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword
In hands that lack the spirit; and here to-day
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes
And see her face transfigured. God is good:
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,
That I were now in saddle! Yet an hour
And I shall be as young again as May
Whose life was come to August; like this year,
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat
Heartsick of summer; but new-mounted now
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear
A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue
Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out
In ears of hope or memory; not for me
Have they been joyous words; but this fair day
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears
And words that make men thankful, even to me
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not
And hope which now they should not.

Mary Beaton. Nay, who knows?
The less they have given of joy, the more they may;
And they who have had their happiness before
Have hope not in the future; time o'erpast
And time to be have several ends, nor wear
One forward face and backward.

Mary Stuart. God, I pray,
Turn thy good words to gospel, and make truth

Of their kind presage! but our Scotswomen
Would say, to be so joyous as I am,
Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,
Were no good warrant of good hope for me.
I never took such comfort of my trust
In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked
For such good end as now of all my fears
From all devices past of policy
To join my name with my misnatured son's
In handfast pledge with England's, ere my foes
His counsellors had flawed his craven faith
And moved my natural blood to cast me off
Who bore him in my body, to come forth
Less childlike than a changeling. But not long
Shall they find means by him to work their will,
Nor he bear head against me; hope was his
To reign forsooth without my fellowship,
And he that with me would not shall not now
Without or with me wield not or divide
Or part or all of empire.

Mary Beaton. Dear my queen,
Vex not your mood with sudden change of thoughts;
Your mind but now was merrier than the sun
Half rid by this through morning: we by noon
Should blithely mount and meet him.

Mary Stuart. So I said.
My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength
Which even but now arrayed it; yet what cause
Should dull the dancing measure in my blood
For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,
My heart again will quicken. *Sings.*

And ye maun braid your yellow hair
And busk ye like a bride;
Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,
And ae true love beside;
Between the birk and the green rowan
Fu' blithely shall ye ride.

O ye maun braid my yellow hair,
But braid it like nae bride;
And I maun gang my ways, mither,
Wi' nae true love beside;
Between the kirk and the kirkyard
Fu' sadly shall I ride.

How long since,
How long since was it last I heard or sang
Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin
With use of country songsters? When we twain
Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,
Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,
But not for songs the merrier.

Mary Beaton. This was one
That I would sing after my nurse, I think,
And weep upon in France at six years old
To think of Scotland.

Mary Stuart. Would I weep for that,
Woman or child, I have had now years enough
To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,
Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now they seem
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time
As their first fathers' graves.

Enter Sir Amyas Paulet.

Paulet. Madam, if now
It please you to set forth, the hour is full,
And there your horses ready.
Mary Stuart. Sir, my thanks.
We are bounden to you and this goodly day
For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride
Accompanied with any for the nonce
Of our own household?
Paul. If you will, to-day
Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.
Mary Stuart. We keep some state then yet. I pray you, sir,
Doth he wait on you that came here last month,
A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded man,
Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-polled,
A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?
Paul. Madam, I know the man for none of mine.
Mary Stuart. I give you joy as you should give God thanks,
Sir, if I err not; but meseemed this man
Found gracious entertainment here, and took
Such counsel with you as I surely thought
Spake him your friend, and honourable; but now
If I misread not an ambiguous word
It seems you know no more of him or less
Than Peter did, being questioned, of his Lord.
Paul. I know not where the cause were to be sought
That might for likeness or unlikeness found
Make seemly way for such comparison
As turns such names to jest and bitterness;
Howbeit, as I denied not nor disclaimed
To know the man you speak of, yet I may
With very purity of truth profess

The man to be not of my following.
Mary Stuart. See
How lightly may the tongue that thinks no ill
Or trip or slip, discoursing that or this
With grave good men in purity and truth,
And come to shame even with a word! God wot,
We had need put bit and bridle in our lips
Ere they take on them of their foolishness
To change wise words with wisdom. Come, sweet friend,
Let us go seek our kind with horse and hound,
To keep us witless company; belike,
There shall we find our fellows.
Exeunt Mary Stuart and Mary Beaton.
Paul. Would to God
This day had done its office! mine till then
Holds me the verier prisoner.

Enter Phillipps.

Phillipps. She will go?
Paul. Gladly, poor sinful fool; more gladly, sir,
Than I go with her.
Phill. Yet you go not far:
She is come too near her end of wayfaring
To tire much more men's feet that follow.
Paul. Ay.
She walks but half blind yet to the end; even now
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully
What here you came to do, or held what place
Or commerce with me: when you caught her eye,
It seems your courtesy by some graceless chance
Found but scant grace with her.
Phill. 'Tis mine own blame,

Or fault of mine own feature; yet forsooth
I greatly covet not their gracious hap
Who have found or find most grace with her. I pray,
Doth Wade go with you?
Paul. Nay, — what, know you not? —
But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,
To drive this deer at Tixall.
Phill. Two years since,
He went, I think, commissioned from the queen
To treat with her at Sheffield?
Paul. Ay, and since
She hath not seen him; who being known of here
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge
Or cause at least of wonder.
Phill. And I doubt
His last year's entertainment oversea
As our queen's envoy to demand of France
Her traitor Morgan's body, whence he brought
Nought save dry blows back from the duke d'Aumale
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang
His own not whole but beaten, should not much
Incline him to more good regard of her
For whose love's sake her friends have dealt with him
So honourably, nor she that knows of this
Be the less like to take his presence here
For no good presage to her: you have both done well
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.
Paul. Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,
What part is for mine honour, or wherein
Of all this action laid upon mine hand
The name and witness of a gentleman
May gain desert or credit, and increase

In seed and harvest of good men's esteem
For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn
Whose fame is as their name derived from his
May reap in reputation; and indeed
I look for none advancement in the world
Further than this that yet for no man's sake
Would I forego, to keep the name I have
And honour, which no son of mine shall say
I have left him not for any deed of mine
As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me:
I say, for any word or work yet past
No tongue can thus far tax me of decline
From that fair forthright way of gentleman,
Nor shall for any that I think to do
Or aught I think to say alive: howbeit,
I were much bounden to the man would say
But so much for me in our mistress' ear,
The treasurer's, or your master Walsingham's,
Whose office here I have undergone thus long
And had I leave more gladly would put off
Than ever I put on me; being not one
That out of love toward England even or God
At mightiest men's desire would lightly be
For loyalty disloyal, or approved
In trustless works a trusty traitor; this
He that should tell them of me, to procure
The speedier end here of this work imposed,
Should bind me to him more heartily than thanks
Might answer.

Phill. Good Sir Amyas, you and I
Hold no such office in this dangerous time
As men make love to for their own name's sake

Or personal lust of honour; but herein
I pray you yet take note, and pardon me
If I for the instance mix your name with mine,
That no man's private honour lies at gage,
Nor is the stake set here to play for less
Than what is more than all men's names alive,
The great life's gage of England; in whose name
Lie all our own impledged, as all our lives
For her redemption forfeit, if the cause
Call once upon us; not this gift or this,
Or what best likes us or were gladliest given
Or might most honourably be parted with
For our more credit on her best behalf,
Doth she we serve, this land that made us men,
Require of all her children; but demands
Of our great duty toward her full deserts
Even all we have of honour or of life,
Of breath or fame to give her. What were I
Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,
Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb
And fashioned out of England, to deny
What gift she crave soever, choose and grudge
What grace we list to give or what withhold,
Refuse and reckon with her when she bids
Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,
A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,
Or lineal pride of children, and the light
Of loyalty remembered? which of these
Were worth our mother's death, or shame that might
Fall for one hour on England? She must live
And keep in all men's sight her honour fast
Though all we die dishonoured; and myself

Know not nor seek of men's report to know
If what I do to serve her till I die
Be honourable or shameful, and its end
Good in men's eyes or evil; but for God,
I find not why the name or fear of him
Herein should make me swerve or start aside
Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken bow
Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft
Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end
Whereto I am sped for service even of him
Who put this office on us.
Paul. Truly, sir,
I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,
Who speak no more than soldier; this I know,
I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand
Such work or such device of yours as yet
For fear and conscience of what worst may come
I dare not well bear through.
Phill. Why, so last month
You writ my master word and me to boot
I had set you down a course for many things
You durst not put in execution, nor
Consign the packet to this lady's hand
That was returned from mine, seeing all was well,
And you should hold yourself most wretched man
If by your mean or order there should spring
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply
The same close trade for the same golden end,
While either holds his mate a faithful fool
And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,
Are coined and stamped and minted for our use

And current in our service; I thereon
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains
The web is wound up of our enterprise
And in our hands we hold her very heart
As fast as all this while we held impawned
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford here
To take what letters for his mistress came
From southward through the ambassador of France
And bear them to the brewer, your honest man,
Who wist no further of his fellowship
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves
As knavish each in his simplicity,
And either serviceable alike, to shift
Between my master's hands and yours and mine
Her letters writ and answered to and fro;
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe
As was the box that held those letters close
At bottom of the barrel, to give up
The charge there sealed and ciphered, and receive
A charge as great in peril and in price
To yield again, when they drew off the beer
That weekly served this lady's household whom
We have drained as dry of secrets drugged with death
As ever they this vessel, and return
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we
For her to drink have tempered. What of this
Should seem so strange now to you, or distaste
So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,
That I should need reiterate you by word
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear
With long foregone recital, that at last

Your soul may start not or your sense recoil
To know what end we are come to, or what hope
We took in hand to cut this peril off
By what close mean soe'er and what foul hands
Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes
Your knightly palm to touch or close with, seeing
The grime of gold is baser than of blood
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall
The trust you took to treasure.
Paul. Sir, I will,
Even till the queen take back that gave it; yet
Will not join hands with these, nor take on mine
The taint of their contagion; knowing no cause
That should confound or couple my good name
With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.
You had these knaveries and these knaves in charge,
Not I that knew not how to handle them
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons, him
That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and brow
No token of a traitor; yet this boy,
This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden chin,
This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on blood
And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you not
Found false or feared by this, whom first you found
A trustier thief and worthier of his wage
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,
That trust no changelings of the church of hell,
No babes reared priestlike at the paps of Rome
Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs drawn dry,

I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth aright,
Which now comes short of promise.
Phill. O, not he;
Let not your knighthood for a slippery word
So much misdoubt his knaveship; here from France,
On hint of our suspicion in his ear
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand
Were set against us in one politic track
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to them,
My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand
Such piteous protestation of his faith
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths
And God and Christ confound him if he lie
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust
Or stand for him approved an atheist.
Paul. Well,
That you find stuff of laughter in such gear
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth
Of such a twice-turned villain, for my part
I take in token of your certain trust,
And make therewith mine own assurance sure,
To see betimes an end of all such craft
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued liars
And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves
To build its hope or break its jest upon;
And so commend you to your charge, and take
Mine own on me less gladly; for by this
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,

Out of God's blessing into the warm sun
And out of the warm sun into the pit
That men have dug before her, as herself
Had dug for England else a deeper grave
To hide our hope for ever: yet I would
This day and all that hang on it were done.

Exeunt.

Scene III. — *Before Tixall Park.*

Mary Stuart, Mary Beaton, Paulet, Curle, Nau, and Attendants.

Mary Stuart. If I should never more back steed alive
But now had ridden hither this fair day
The last road ever I must ride on earth,
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone
And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last
I had found no joyless end. These ways are smooth,
And all this land's face merry; yet I find
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,
And all the land's face therefore less worth love,
Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace
And merrier than our moors for outlook; nay,
I lie to say so; there the wind and sun
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill
With broader breath and lustier length of light
The heartier hours that clothe for even and dawn
Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the sea
For miles of heaving heather. Ye should mock
My banished praise of Scotland; and in faith

I praised it but to prick you on to praise
Of your own goodly land; though field and wood
Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and strait
That we but now rode over, and by ours
Look pale for lack of large live mountain bloom
Wind-buffeted with morning, it should be
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives
In keeping here of history: but meseems
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west
As of a land more affluent-souled than this
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind; here
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late
Fast by the feet at Tutbury; but men say
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair
In goodlier ground of heritage: perchance,
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,
Who less than you can help it or myself,
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

Paulet. Madam, no;
I pray you lay not to my wilful charge
The blame or burden of discourtesy
That but the time should bear which lays on me
This weight of thoughts untimely.

Mary Stuart. Nay, fair sir,
If I, that have no cause in life to seem
Glad of my sad life more than prisoners may,
Take comfort yet of sunshine, he methinks
That holds in ward my days and nights might well
Take no less pleasure of this broad blithe air

Than his poor charge that too much troubles him.
What, are we nigh the chase?
Paul. Even hard at hand.
Mary Stuart. Can I not see between the glittering leaves
Gleam the dun hides and flash the startled horns
That we must charge and scatter? Were I queen
And had a crown to wager on my hand,
Sir, I would set it on the chance to-day
To shoot a flight beyond you.
Paul. Verily,
The hazard were too heavy for my skill:
I would not hold your wager.
Mary Stuart. No! and why?
Paul. For fear to come a bowshot short of you
On the left hand, unluckily.
Mary Stuart. My friend,
Our keeper's wit-shaft is too keen for ours
To match its edge with pointless iron. — Sir,
Your tongue shoots further than my hand or eye
With sense or aim can follow. — Gilbert Curle,
Your heart yet halts behind this cry of hounds,
Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who lies
Now close in covert till her bearing-time
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind
To love that yet lacks issue; and in sooth
I blame you not to bid all sport go by
For one white doe's sake travailing, who myself
Think long till I may take within mine arm
The soft fawn suckling that is yeaned not yet
But is to make her mother. We must hold
A goodly christening feast with prisoner's cheer
And mirth enow for such a tender thing

As will not weep more to be born in bonds
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor grudge
To find no friend more fortunate than I
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if God
Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for love
Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,
A maid to be my namechild, and in all
Save love to them that love her, by God's grace,
Most unlike me; for whose unborn sweet sake
Pray you meantime be merry. — 'Faith, methinks
Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look up;
What think you of these riders? — All my friends,
Make on to meet them.

Paul. There shall need no haste;
They ride not slack or lamely.

Mary Stuart. Now, fair sir,
What say you to my chance on wager? here
I think to outshoot your archery. — By my life,
That too must fail if hope now fail me; these
That ride so far off yet, being come, shall bring
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but once;
Aside to Mary Beaton.
Say, these are they we looked for; say, thou too
Hadst hope to meet them; say, they should be here,
And I did well to look for them; O God!
Say but I was not mad to hope; see there;
Speak, or I die.

Mary Beaton. Nay, not before they come.

Mary Stuart. Dost thou not hear my heart? it speaks so loud

I can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not
Fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine hour
That was to be for triumph; God, I pray,
Stretch not its length out longer!
Mary Beaton. It is past.

Enter Sir Thomas Gorges, Sir William Wade, and Soldiers.

Mary Stuart. What man is this that stands across our way?
Gorges. One that hath warrant, madam, from the queen
To arrest your French and English secretary
And for more surety see yourself removed
To present ward at Tixall here hard by,
As in this paper stands of her subscribed.
Lay hands on them.
Mary Stuart. Was this your riddle's word? *To Paulet.*
You have shot beyond me indeed, and shot to death
Your honour with my life. — Draw, sirs, and stand;
Ye have swords yet left to strike with once, and die
By these our foes are girt with. Some good friend —
I should have one yet left of you — take heart
And slay me here. For God's love, draw; they have not
So large a vantage of us we must needs
Bear back one foot from peril. Give not way;
Ye shall but die more shamefully than here
Who can but here die fighting. What, no man?
Must I find never at my need alive
A man with heart to help me? O, my God,
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,
Who have played so well my doomsman, and betrayed

So honourably my trust, so bravely set
A snare so loyal to make sure for death
So poor a foolish woman? Sir, or you
That have this gallant office, great as his,
To do the deadliest errand and most vile
That even your mistress ever laid on man
And sent her basest knave to bear and slay,
You are likewise of her chivalry, and should not
Shrink to fulfil your title; being a knight,
For her dear sake that made you, lose not heart
To strike for her one worthy stroke, that may
Rid me defenceless of the loathed long life
She gapes for like a bloodhound. Nay, I find
A face beside you that should bear for me
Not life inscribed upon it; two years since
I read therein at Sheffield what goodwill
She bare toward me that sent to treat withal
So mean a man and shameless, by his tongue
To smite mine honour on the face, and turn
My name of queen to servant; by his hand
So let her turn my life's name now to death,
Which I would take more thankfully than shame
To plead and thus prevail not.

Paul. Madam, no,
With us you may not in such suit prevail
Nor we by words or wrath of yours be moved
To turn their edge back on you, nor remit
The least part of our office, which deserves
Nor scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act
Has laid it on us; wherefore with less rage
Please you take thought now to submit yourself,
Even for your own more honour, to the effect

Whose cause was of your own device, that here
Bears fruit unlooked for; which being ripe in time
You cannot choose but taste of, nor may we
But do the season's bidding, and the queen's
Who weeps at heart to know it. — Disarm these men;
Take you the prisoners to your present ward
And hence again to London; here meanwhile
Some week or twain their lady must lie close
And with a patient or impatient heart
Expect an end and word of judgment: I
Must with Sir William back to Chartley straight
And there make inquisition ere day close
What secret serpents of what treasons hatched
May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we
Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet unfleshed,
And lay these plots like dead and strangled snakes
Naked before the council.

Mary Stuart. I must go?

Gorges. Madam, no help; I pray your pardon.

Mary Stuart. Ay?

Had I your pardon in this hand to give,
And here in this my vengeance — Words, and words!
God, for thy pity! what vile thing is this
That thou didst make of woman? even in death,
As in the extremest evil of all our lives,
We can but curse or pray, but prate and weep,
And all our wrath is wind that works no wreck,
And all our fire as water. Noble sirs,
We are servants of your servants, and obey
The beck of your least groom; obsequiously,
We pray you but report of us so much,
Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,

May it not displease you, for old service' sake,
Of one my servant here that was, and now
Hath no word for me; yet I blame him not,
Who am past all help of man; God witness me,
I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my tongue
Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge
Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath
A thing that babes might shrink at; only this
Take with you for your poor queen's true last word,
That if they let me live so long to see
The fair wife's face again from whose soft side,
Now labouring with your child, by violent hands
You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live
I will have charge of her more carefully
Than of mine own life's keeping, which indeed
I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,
How soon or how men take it. Nay, good friend,
Weep not; my weeping time is wellnigh past,
And theirs whose eyes have too much wept for me
Should last no longer. Sirs, I give you thanks
For thus much grace and patience shown of you,
My gentle gaolers, towards a queen unqueened
Who shall nor get nor crave again of man
What grace may rest in him to give her. Come,
Bring me to bonds again, and her with me
That hath not stood so nigh me all these years
To fall ere life doth from my side, or take
Her way to death without me till I die.

Act II

WALSINGHAM

Scene I. — *Windsor Castle.*

Queen Elizabeth and Sir Francis Walsingham.

Elizabeth. What will ye make me? Let the council know
I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay
Too strange a burden on my love who send
As to their servant word what ways to take,
What sentence of my subjects given subscribe
And in mine own name utter. Bid them wait;
Have I not patience? and was never quick
To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,
Lest one day strange tongues blot my fame with blood;
The red addition of my sister's name
Shall brand not mine.

Walsingham. God grant your mercy shown
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own
Shed through your own sweet-spirited height of heart
That held your hand from justice.

Eliz. I would rather
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own blood
Than with a sister's — innocent; or indeed
Though guilty — being a sister's — might I choose,
As being a queen I may not surely — no —
I may not choose, you tell me.

Wal. Nay, no man
Hath license of so large election given

As once to choose, being servant called of God,
If he will serve or no, or save the name
And slack the service.
Eliz. Yea, but in his Word
I find no word that whets for king-killing
The sword kings bear for justice; yet I doubt,
Being drawn, it may not choose but strike at root —
Being drawn to cut off treason. Walsingham,
You are more a statesman than a gospeller;
Take for your tongue's text now no text of God's,
But what the devil has put into their lips
Who should have slain me; nay, what by God's grace,
Who bared their purpose to us, through pain or fear
Hath been wrung thence of secrets writ in fire
At bottom of their hearts. Have they confessed?
Wal. The twain trapped first in London.
Eliz. What, the priest?
Their twice-turned Ballard, ha?
Wal. Madam, not he.
Eliz. God's blood! ye have spared not him the torment, knaves?
Of all I would not spare him.
Wal. Verily, no;
The rack hath spun his life's thread out so fine
There is but left for death to slit in twain
The thickness of a spider's.
Eliz. Ay, still dumb?
Wal. Dumb for all good the pains can get of him;
Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends
With poisonous purpose toward your majesty,
He had kept scarce harder silence.

Eliz. Poison? ay —
That should be still the churchman's household sword
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from far
And break them with his precious balms that smell
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia; but the rest
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill
Some death more gracious than a rat's? God wot,
I am bounden to them, and will charge for this
The hangman thank them heartily; they shall not
Lack daylight means to die by. God, meseems,
Will have me not die darkling like a dog,
Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart
From shot of English knave or Spanish, both
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors, whom
My riddance from all ills that plague man's life
Should have made great in record; and for wage
Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies
As dumb in bonds as those dead dogs in earth,
You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en
There are that keep not silence: what say these?
Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to death.
Wal. The first a soldier, Savage, in these wars
That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck
Under the prince Farnese, then of late
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,
My smock-faced spy's good uncle, to take off
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self;
And since his passage hither, to confirm

His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good
The purpose laid upon his hand; this man
Makes yet more large confession than of this,
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had
Assurance that in Italy the Pope
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,
But in their actual aim bent hither, where
With French and Spaniards in one front of war
They might make in upon us; but from France
No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace
Till — so they phrase it — by these Catholics here
Your majesty be taken, or —

Eliz. No more —

But only taken? springed but bird-like? Ha!
They are something tender of our poor personal chance —
Temperately tender: yet I doubt the springe
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or — so be it
I slip the springe — what yet may shackle France,
Hang weights upon their purpose who should else
Be great of heart against us? They take time
Till I be taken — or till what signal else
As favourable?

Wal. Till she they serve be brought
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

Eliz. Ay? they know him
So much my servant, and his guard so good,
That sound of strange feet marching on our soil
Against us in his prisoner's name perchance
Might from the walls wherein she sits his guest
Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think
He would not dare — what think'st thou might he dare
Without my word for warrant? If I knew
This —

Wal. It should profit not your grace to know
What may not be conceivable for truth
Without some stain on honour.

Eliz. Nay, I say not
That I would have him take upon his hand
More than his trust may warrant: yet have men,
Good men, for very truth of their good hearts
Put loyal hand to work as perilous — well,
God wot I would not have him so transgress —
If such be called transgressors.

Wal. Let the queen
Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these
That moved him toward your murder but in trust
Thereby to bring invasion oversea:
Which one more gently natured of his birth
Tichborne, protests with very show of truth
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he saith,
The miseries of such conquest: nor, it seems,
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose bent
Against your highness.

Eliz. Naught? why then, again,
To him I am yet more bounden, who may think,

Being found but half my traitor, at my hands
To find but half a hangman.
Wal. Nay, the man
Herein seems all but half his own man, being
Made merely out of stranger hearts and brains
Their engine of conspiracy; for thus
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend
First showed him how himself was wrought upon
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose head
All these lay all their forfeit.
Eliz. Yet shall each
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down
In costlier drops than gold is. But of these
Why take we thought? their natural-subject blood
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed attempt,
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she
That is the head and heart of all your fears
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or dead,
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will write
With mine own hand to her privily, — what else? —
Saying, if by word as privy from her hand
She will confess her treasonous practices,
They shall be wrapped in silence up, and she
By judgment live unscathed.
Wal. Being that she is,
So surely will she deem of your great grace,
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.
Eliz. Why, then, well:

She, casting off my grace, from all men's grace
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows
By silence and suspect of jealous heart
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof
I will proclaim her to the parliament
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have
Her name and life by mortal evidence
Touched at the trial of them that now shall die
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself
Fall in more peril of her friends than she
Stands yet in shot of judgment.
Wal. Be assured,
Madam, the process of their treasons judged
Shall tax not her before her trial-time
With public note of clear complicity
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.
Eliz. Me
So much it moves not for my mere life's sake
Which I would never buy with fear of death
As for the general danger's and the shame's
Thence cast on queenship and on womanhood
By mean of such a murderess. But, for them,
I would the merited manner of their death
Might for more note of terror be referred
To me and to my council: these at least
Shall hang for warning in the world's wide eye
More high than common traitors, with more pains
Being ravished forth of their more villainous lives
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves henceforth
But shall be sure of hire more terrible
Than all past wage of treason.

Wal. Why, so far
As law gives leave —
Eliz. What prat'st thou me of law?
God's blood! is law for man's sake made, or man
For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land
And all its hope and surety given to time
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,
More than one rag or relic of its law
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure
Have states no less than ours been done to death
With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance
Though thence the state were strangled.
Wal. Madam, yet
There need no need be here of law's least breach,
That of all else is worst necessity —
Being such a mortal medicine to the state
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.
Eliz. Ay, but if air be poison-struck with plague
Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,
Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's fair sake
Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe the trance,
With purging fire or iron. Have your way.
God send good end of all this, and procure
Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and his
May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,
And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

Scene II. — *Chartley.*

Mary Beaton and Sir Amyas Paulet.

Paulet. You should do well to bid her less be moved
Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came
Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers
Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities
Should move a heart more constant. Verily,
I thought she had held more rule upon herself
Than to call out on beggars at the gate
When she rode forth, crying she had nought to give,
Being all as much a beggar too as they,
With all things taken from her.
Mary Beaton. Being so served,
In sooth she should not show nor shame nor spleen:
It was but seventeen days ye held her there
Away from all attendance, as in bonds
Kept without change of raiment, and to find,
Being thence haled hither again, no nobler use,
But all her papers plundered — then her keys
By force of violent threat wrung from the hand
She scarce could stir to help herself abed:
These were no matters that should move her.
Paul. None,
If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,
Nor else than pure in purpose, but maligned
Of men's suspicions: how should one thus wronged
But hold all hard chance good to approve her case
Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to thanks
That might unload her of so sore a charge,
Despoiled not, but disburdened? Her great wrath

Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud
Alone, ere other witness might unseal
Wrath's fierce interpretation: which ere long
Was of her secretaries expounded.
Mary Beaton. Sir,
As you are honourable, and of equal heart
Have shown such grace as man being manful may
To such a piteous prisoner as desires
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty
Though you comply therewith to comfort her,
Let her not think your spirit so far incensed
By wild words of her mistress cast on you
In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen
That you should now close ears against a prayer
Which else might fairly find them open.
Paul. Speak
More short and plainly: what I well may grant
Shall so seem easiest granted.
Mary Beaton. There should be
No cause I think to seal your lips up, though
I crave of them but so much breath as may
Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne
(If aught of witness were against her borne)
By those her secretaries you spake of.
Paul. This
With hard expostulation was drawn forth
At last of one and other, that they twain
Had writ by record from their lady's mouth
To Babington some letter which implies
Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill
To meet his service with complicity:
But one thing found therein of deadliest note

The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor she
Bade write one word of favour nor assent
Answering this murderous motion toward our queen:
Only, saith he, she held herself not bound
For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby
For love of enemies do to death such friends
As only for her own love's sake were found
Fit men for murderous treason: and so much
Her own hand's transcript of the word she sent
Should once produced bear witness of her.
Mary Beaton. Ay?
How then came this withholden?
Paul. If she speak
But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,
And shall, with God's goodwill, to good men's joy
That wish not evil: as at Fotheringay
When she shall come to trial must be tried
If it be truth or no: for which assay
You shall do toward her well and faithfully
To bid her presently prepare her soul
That it may there make answer.
Mary Beaton. Presently?
Paul. Upon the arraignment of her friends who stand
As 'twere at point of execution now
Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.
Would you no more with me?
Mary Beaton. I am bounden to you
For thus much tidings granted.
Paul. So farewell. *Exit.*
Mary Beaton. So fare I well or ill as one who knows
He shall not fare much further toward his end.
Here looms on me the landmark of my life

That I have looked for now some score of years
Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart
And a most hungry patience. I did know,
Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that while,
From that day forth when even these eyes beheld
Fall the most faithful head in all the world,
Toward her most loving and of me most loved,
By doom of hers that was so loved of him
He could not love me nor his life at all
Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,
Nor could fear death nor very God, or care
If there were aught more merciful in heaven
Than love on earth had been to him. Chastelard!
I have not had the name upon my lips
That stands for sign of love the truest in man
Since first love made him sacrifice of men,
This long sad score of years retributive
Since it was cast out of her heart and mind
Who made it mean a dead thing; nor, I think,
Will she remember it before she die
More than in France the memories of old friends
Are like to have yet forgotten; but for me,
Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,
If all these years I have had not in my mind
Through all these chances this one thought in all,
That I shall never leave her till she die.
Nor surely now shall I much longer serve
Who fain would lie down at her foot and sleep,
Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my soul
Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not hand
To such a work as might put on the time
And make death's foot more forward for her sake:

Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul
From bondage and long-suffering of my life,
I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.
Tempted I was — but hath God need of me
To work his judgment, bring his time about,
Approve his justice if the word be just
That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,
Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for tears,
And bleed for bloodshed? God should spare me this
That once I held the one good hope on earth,
To be the mean and engine of her end
Or some least part at least therein: I prayed,
God, give me so much grace — who now should pray,
Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once to know
I bore her death about me; as I think
Indeed I bear it: but what need hath God,
That I should clench his doom with craft of mine?
What needs the wrath of hot Elizabeth
Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,
Which hath to enkindle it higher already proof
Of present practice on her state and life?
Shall fear of death or love of England fail
Or memory faint or foresight fall stark blind,
That there should need the whet and spur of shame
To turn her spirit into some chafing snake's
And makes its fang more feared for mortal? Yet
I am glad, and I repent me not, to know
I have the writing in my bosom sealed
That bears such matter with her own hand signed
As she that yet repents her not to have writ
Repents her not that she refrained to send
And fears not but long since it felt the fire —

Being fire itself to burn her, yet unquenched,
But in my hand here covered harmless up
Which had in charge to burn it. What perchance
Might then the reading of it have wrought for us,
If all this fiery poison of her scoffs
Making the foul froth of a serpent's tongue
More venomous, and more deadly toward her queen
Even Bess of Hardwick's bitterest babbling tales,
Had touched at heart the Tudor vein indeed?
Enough it yet were surely, though that vein
Were now the gentlest that such hearts may hold
And all doubt's trembling balance that way bent,
To turn as with one mortal grain cast in
The scale of grace against her life that writ
And weigh down pity deathward.

Enter Mary Stuart.

Mary Stuart. Have we found
Such kindness of our keeper as may give
Some ease from expectation? or must hope
Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay
As men abiding judgment?

Mary Beaton. Now not long,
He tells me, need we think to tarry; since
The time and place of trial are set, next month
To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

Mary Stuart. Why, he knows well I were full easily moved
To set forth hence; there must I find more scope
To commune with the ambassador of France
By letter thence to London: but, God help,
Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,
What never man durst yet nor woman dreamed,

May one that is nor man nor woman think,
To bring a queen born subject of no laws
Here in subjection of an alien law
By foreign force of judgment? Were she wise,
Might she not have me privily made away?
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart
Enough to attaint the rule of royal rights
With murderous madness? I will think not this
Till it be proven indeed.

Mary Beaton. A month come round,
This man protests, will prove it.

Mary Stuart. Ay! protests?
What protestation of what Protestant
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth made,
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay
The general saying of ages? If I go,
Compelled of God's hand or constrained of man's,
Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce
My tongue to plead before them for my life.
I had rather end as kings before me, die
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,
Than so make answer once in face of man
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they mad,
And she most mad for envious heart of all,
To make so mean account of me? Methought,
When late we came back hither soiled and spent
And sick with travel, I had seen their worst of wrong
Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I found
My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife
Without priest's comfort and her babe unblessed
A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,

And took it from the mother's arms abed
And bade her have good comfort, since myself
Would take all charge against her husband laid
On mine own head to answer; deeming not
Man ever durst bid answer for myself
On charge as mortal: and mine almoner gone,
Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace
His chaplain might baptize me this poor babe,
And was denied it, and with mine own hands
For shame and charity moved to christen her
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight
By mine own woful name, whence God, I pray,
For her take off its presage? I misdeemed,
Who deemed all these and yet far more than these
For one born queen indignities enough,
On one crowned head enough of buffets: more
Hath time's hand laid upon me: yet I keep
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying
Two things were mine though I stood spoiled of all
As of my letters and my privy coin
By pickpurse hands of office: these things yet
Might none take thievish hold upon to strip
His prisoner naked of her natural dower,
The blood yet royal running here unspilled
And that religion which I think to keep
Fast as this royal blood until I die.
So where at last and howsoe'er I fare
I need not much take thought, nor thou for love
Take of thy mistress pity; yet meseems
They dare not work their open will on me:
But God's it is that shall be done, and I
Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep

On this strange news of thine, that being awake
I may the freshlier front my sense thereof
And thought of life or death. Come in with me.

Scene III. — *Tyburn.*

A Crowd of Citizens.

1st Citizen. Is not their hour yet on? Men say the queen
Bade spare no jot of torment in their end
That law might lay upon them.
2nd Citizen. Truth it is,
To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice may
Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve
God's with mere inobservance. Hear you not
How yet the loud lewd braggarts of their side
Keep heart to threaten that for all this foil
They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work
Shall prosper with deliverance of their queen
And death for her of ours, though they should give
Of their own lives for one an hundredfold?
3rd Citizen. These are bold mouths; one that shall die to-day,
Being this last week arraigned at Westminster,
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,
Who was the main head of their treasons.
1st Cit. Ay,
And yesterday, if truth belie not him,
Durst with his doomed hand write some word of prayer
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave
Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she

Might work on one too tainted to deserve
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame
For pity of sins too great for pity of man
Might shine more glorious than his crime showed foul
In the eye of such a mercy.
2nd Cit. Yet men said
He spake at his arraignment soberly
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture, showing
The purport of his treasons in such wise
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how
All their beginnings and proceedings had
First head and fountain only for their spring
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest
Who stood the guiltiest near, by this man's side
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,
Made simply protestation of design
To work no personal ill against the queen
Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red
With blood imperial: Tichborne then avowed
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,
And held forsooth himself no traitor; yet
In the end would even plead guilty, Donne with him,
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still
Stood out against the killing of the queen,
And would not hurt her for a kingdom: so,
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,
Why sentence should not pass: and Ballard first,
Who had been so sorely racked he might not stand,
Spake, but as seems to none effect: of whom
Said Babington again, he set them on,

He first, and most of all him, who believed
This priest had power to assoil his soul alive
Of all else mortal treason: Ballard then,
As in sad scorn — *Yea, Master Babington,*
Quoth he, *lay all upon me, but I wish*
For you the shedding of my blood might be
The saving of your life: howbeit, for that,
Say what you will; and I will say no more.
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his cause
Guilty: nor yet spake Tichborne aught: but Donne
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had sinned
For very conscience only: Salisbury last
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the rest
That sat with him commissioners, and showed
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries
And instance most of Ballard had been brought
To extreme destruction here of body and soul
A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed
With goodly gifts of birthright: and in fine
There was the sentence given that here even now
Shows seven for dead men in our present sight
And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

Enter Babington, Ballard (carried in a chair), Tichborne, Savage, Barnwell, Tilney, and Abington, guarded: Sheriff, Executioner, Chaplain, &c.

1st Cit. What, will they speak?
2nd Cit. Ay; each hath leave in turn
To show what mood he dies in toward his cause.
Ballard. Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our doom,

I being here given this grace to speak to you
Have but my word to witness for my soul,
That all I have done and all designed to do
Was only for advancement of true faith
To furtherance of religion: for myself
Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear church
Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem
Her sore affliction in this age and land,
As now may not be yet: which knowing for truth,
I am readier even at heart to die than live.
And dying I crave of all men pardon whom
My doings at all have touched, or who thereat
Take scandal; and forgiveness of the queen
If on this cause I have offended her.

Savage. The like say I, that have no skill in speech,
But heart enough with faith at heart to die,
Seeing but for conscience and the common good,
And no preferment but this general weal,
I did attempt this business.

Barnwell. I confess
That I, whose seed was that of that hallowed earth
Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for Christ,
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny
That ever I consented with or could
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came
To spy for them occasions in the court
And there being noted of her majesty
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's
That had such purpose as she wist before
Prayed God that all were well — if this were urged,
I might make answer, it was not unknown
To divers of the council that I there

Had matters to solicit of mine own
Which thither drew me then: yet I confess
That Babington, espying me thence returned,
Asked me what news: to whom again I told,
Her majesty had been abroad that day,
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now
If I have done her majesty offence
I crave her pardon: and assuredly
If this my body's sacrifice might yet
Establish her in true religion, here
Most willingly should this be offered up.

Tilney. I came not here to reason of my faith,
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

Abington. I likewise, and if aught I have erred in aught
I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,
Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith;
And all things charged against me I confess,
Save that I ever sought her highness' death:
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear
Will be great bloodshed.

Sheriff. Seest thou, Abington,
Here all these people present of thy kind
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands
If dying thou hide what might endanger them?
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal mean
Should there be shed such blood?

Abing. All that I know
You have on record: take but this for sure,
This country lives for its iniquity
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.

Whereon I pray you trouble me no more
With questions of this world, but let me pray
And in mine own wise make my peace with God.
Bab. For me, first head of all this enterprise,
I needs must make this record of myself,
I have not conspired for profit, but in trust
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured
This work was lawful which I should have done
And meritorious as toward God; for which
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen
And that my brother may possess my lands
In heritage else forfeit with my head.
Tich. Good countrymen and my dear friends, you look
For something to be said of me, that am
But an ill orator; and my text is worse.
Vain were it to make full discourse of all
This cause that brings me hither, which before
Was all made bare, and is well known to most
That have their eyes upon me: let me stand
For all young men, and most for those born high,
Their present warning here: a friend I had,
Ay, and a dear friend, one of whom I made
No small account, whose friendship for pure love
To this hath brought me: I may not deny
He told me all the matter, how set down,
And ready to be wrought; which always I
Held impious, and denied to deal therein:
But only for my friend's regard was I
Silent, and verified a saying in me,
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing chanced,
How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart
Together, in what flourishing estate,

This town well knows: of whom went all report
Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and the Strand
And all parts else that sound men's fortunate names,
But Babington and Tichborne? that therein
There was no haughtiest threshold found of force
To brave our entry; thus we lived our life,
And wanted nothing we might wish for: then,
For me, what less was in my head, God knows,
Than high state matters? Give me now but leave
Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence
To his estate I well may liken mine,
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing
To enjoy all else afforded of the world:
The terror of my conscience hung on me;
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there
Appointing that my horses by his mean
Should meet me here in London, whence I thought
To flee into the country: but being here
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad:
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods
And there were taken. My dear countrymen,
Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,
Yet mix your smiles with tears: pity my case,
Who, born out of an house whose name descends
Even from two hundred years ere English earth
Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,
I have a wife, and one sweet child: my wife,
My dear wife Agnes: and my grief is there,
And for six sisters too left on my hand:

All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,
Upon their master's capture: all which things
Most heartily I sorrow for: and though
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault
From the queen's absolute grace and clemency;
That the unexpired remainder of my years
Might in some sort have haply recompensed
This former guilt of mine whereof I die:
But seeing such fault may find not such release
Even of her utter mercies, heartily
I crave at least of her and all the world
Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,
And to men's memory this my penitence
Till our death's record die from out the land.

1st Cit. God pardon him! Stand back: what ail these knaves
To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;
I thank you; hence we take them full in view:
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in hand?

Act III

BURGHLEY

Scene I. — *The presence chamber in Fotheringay Castle. At the upper end, a chair of state as for Queen Elizabeth; opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for Mary Stuart. The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right the Earls, with Lord Chancellor Bromley and Lord Treasurer Burghley; to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them Walsingham and Paulet; Popham, Egerton, and Gawdy, as Counsel for the Crown. Enter Mary Stuart, supported by Sir Andrew Melville, and takes her place.*

Mary Stuart. Here are full many men of counsel met;
Not one for me. *The Chancellor rises.*
Bromley. Madam, this court is held
To make strait inquisition as by law
Of what with grief of heart our queen has heard,
A plot upon her life, against the faith
Here in her kingdom established: on which cause
Our charge it is to exact your answer here,
And put to proof your guilt or innocence.
Mary Stuart [*rising*]. Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand before,
My lords, and not my judges, since no law
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,

I rise not here to make response as one
Responsible toward any for my life
Or of mine acts accountable to man,
Who see none higher save only God in heaven:
I am no natural subject of your land
That I should here plead as a criminal charged,
Nor in such wise appear I now: I came
On your queen's faith to seek in England help
By trothplight pledged me: where by promise-breach
I am even since then her prisoner held in ward:
Yet, understanding by report of you
Some certain things I know not of to be
Against me brought on record, by my will
I stand content to hear and answer these.

Brom. Madam, there lives none born on earth so high
Who for this land's laws' breach within this land
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

Burghley. Let there be record of the prisoner's plea
And answer given such protest here set down,
And so proceed we to this present charge.

Gawdy. My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance
The model of this whole conspiracy
Should lay the pattern of all treasons bare
That ever brought high state in danger: this
No man there lives among us but hath heard,
How certain men of our queen's household folk
Being wrought on by persuasion of their priests
Drew late a bond between them, binding these
With others of their faith accomplices
Directed first of Anthony Babington
By mean of six for execution chosen
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon

Make all her trustiest men of trust away;
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,
And one that held in charge awhile agone
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.
That she was hereto privy, to her power
Approving and abetting their device,
It shall not stand us in much need to show
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest
On record written of their hands and hers.

Mary Stuart. Of all this I know nothing: Babington
I have used for mine intelligencer, sent
With letters charged at need, but never yet
Spake with him, never writ him word of mine
As privy to these close conspiracies
Nor word of his had from him. Never came
One harmful thought upon me toward your queen,
Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye say,
Forsooth ye hold to impeach me: I desire
But only to behold and handle them
If they in sooth of sense be tangible
More than mere air and shadow.

Burgh. Let the clerk
Produce those letters writ from Babington.

Mary Stuart. What then? it may be such were writ of him:
Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.
If Babington affirm so much, I say
He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

Gaw. Here is the man's confession writ, and here
Ballard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,
Savage, that served with Parma.

Mary Stuart. What of these?
Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.
Gaw. And here the last her letter of response
Confirming and approving in each point
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.
Mary Stuart. My letter? none of mine it is: perchance
It may be in my cipher charactered,
But never came from or my tongue or hand:
I have sought mine own deliverance, and thereto
Solicited of my friends their natural help:
Yet certain whom I list not name there were,
Whose offers made of help to set me free
Receiving, yet I answered not a word.
Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm
Of persecution from the church, for this
To your queen's grace I have made most earnest suit:
But for mine own part I would purchase not
This kingdom with the meanest one man's death
In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.
Many there be have dangerously designed
Things that I knew not: yea, but very late
There came a letter to my hand which craved
My pardon if by enterprise of some
Were undertaken aught unknown of me:
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,
As he that vaunted him of late in France
To be my son's base brother: and I fear
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it knows,
May be that secretary's fair handiwork
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.
But I protest I have not so much as thought

Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen:
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life
Than for my sake the Catholics should be thus
Afflicted only in very hate of me
And drawn to death so cruel as these tears
Gush newly forth to think of.
Burgh. Here no man
Who hath showed himself true subject to the state
Was ever for religion done to death:
But some for treason, that against the queen
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.
Mary Stuart. Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed
And read in books set forth in print as much.
Burgh. They that so write say too the queen hath here
Made forfeit of her royal dignity.
Walsingham. Here I call God to record on my part
That personally or as a private man
I have done nought misbeseeming honesty,
Nor as I bear a public person's place
Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess
That, being right careful of the queen's estate
And safety of this realm, I have curiously
Searched out the practices against it: nay,
Herein had Ballard offered me his help,
I durst not have denied him; yea, I would
Have recompensed the pains he had taken. Say
I have practised aught with him, why did he not,
To save his life, reveal it?
Mary Stuart. Pray you, sir,
Take no displeasure at me: truth it is
Report has found me of your dealings, blown
From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself

I put no credit: and could but desire
Yourself would all as little make account
Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are men
Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things
Far other than they speak. Do not believe
That I gave ever or could give consent
Once to the queen's destruction: I would never,
These tears are bitter witness, never would
Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing
Destruction of my dearest sister.
Gawdy. This
Shall soon by witness be disproved: as here
Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand
Transcribed, which Curle your secretary hath borne
Plain witness you received, touching a league
Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred
Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence
To give you freedom.
Mary Stuart. What of this? ye shoot
Wide of the purpose: this approves not me
Consenting to the queen's destruction.
Gawdy. That
Stands proven enough by word of Babington
Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed
From him to you, whom he therein acclaims
As his most dread and sovereign lady and queen,
And by the way makes mention passingly
Of a plot laid by transference to convey
This kingdom to the Spaniard.
Mary Stuart. I confess
There came a priest unto me, saying if I
Would not herein bear part I with my son

Alike should be debarred the inheritance:
His name ye shall not have of me: but this
Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays
Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give
Place ever save to me.
Burghley. Still stands the charge
On written witness of your secretaries
Great on all points against you.
Mary Stuart. Wherefore then
Are not these writers with these writings brought
To outface me front to front? For Gilbert Curle,
He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,
Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,
The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will
Moulds, turns, and tempers: being himself a knave
That may be hired or scared with peril or coin
To swear what thing men bid him. Truth again
Is this that I deny not, seeing myself
Against all right held fast in English ward,
I have sought all help where I might hope to find:
Which thing that I dispute not, let this be
The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth
In all objected to me. For the rest,
All majesty that moves in all the world
And all safe station of all princes born
Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground,
If on the testimony of secretaries
And on their writings merely these depend,
Being to their likeness thence debased: for me,
Nought I delivered to them but what first
Nature to me delivered, that I might
Recover yet at length my liberty.

I am not to be convicted save alone
By mine own word or writing. If these men
Have written toward the queen my sister's hurt
Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all:
Let them be put to punishment: I am sure,
Were these here present, they by testimony
Would bring me clear of blame.
Gaw. Yet by their mean
They could not in excuse of you deny
That letters of communion to and fro
Have passed between you and the Spaniard, whence
What should have come on England and the queen
These both well know, and with what messages
Were English exiles entertained of you
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy
For this her kingdom's overthrow: in France
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design
Of one close mind with you, and in your name
Cheered hence for constant service.
Mary Stuart. That I sought
Comfort and furtherance of all Catholic states
By what mean found soever just and good,
Your mistress from myself had note long since
And open warning: uncompelled I made
Avowal of such my righteous purpose, nor
In aught may disavow it. Of these late plots
No proof is here to attaint mine innocence,
Who dare all proof against me: Babington
I know not of, nor Ballard, nor their works,
But kings my kinsmen, powers that serve the church,
These I confess my comforters, in hope

Held fast of their alliance. Yet again
I challenge in the witness of my words
The notes writ of these letters here alleged
In mine own hand: if these ye bring not forth,
Judge all good men if I be not condemned
In all your hearts already, who perchance
For all this pageant held of lawless law
Have bound yourselves by pledge to speak me dead:
But I would have you look into your souls,
Remembering how the theatre of the world
Is wider, in whose eye ye are judged that judge,
Than this one realm of England.

Burgh. Toward that realm
Suffice it here that, madam, you stand charged
With deadly purpose: being of proven intent
To have your son conveyed to Spain, and give
The title you pretend upon our crown
Up with his wardship to King Philip.

Mary Stuart. Nay,
I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown
Whereof to make conveyance: yet is this
But lawful, that of all things which are mine
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none
Stand on such count accountable.

Burgh. So be it
So far as may be: but your ciphers sent
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh
By mean of Grange your friend his father-in-law,
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor
Of import less than kingdoms.

Mary Stuart. Surely, sir,
Such have I writ, and many; nor therein
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to commend
That lord you speak of, and another, both
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,
And that, I trust, without offence: except
It be not held as lawful on my part
To commune with the chiefest of my creed
By written word on matters of mine own
As for your queen with churchfolk of her kind.
Burgh. Well were it, madam, that with some of yours
You had held less close communion: since by proof
Reiterated from those your secretaries
It seems you know right well that Morgan, who
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,
And have assigned him annual pension.
Mary Stuart. This
I know not, whether or no your charge be truth,
But I do know this Morgan hath lost all
For my sake, and in honour sure I am
That rather to relieve him I stand bound
Than to revenge an injury done your queen
By one that lives my friend, and hath deserved
Well at mine hands: yet, being not bound to this,
I did affright the man from such attempts
Of crimes against her, who contrariwise
Hath out of England openly assigned
Pensions to Gray my traitor, and the Scots
Mine adversaries, as also to my son,
To hire him to forsake me.
Burgh. Nay, but seeing
By negligence of them that steered the state

The revenues of Scotland sore impaired
Somewhat in bounty did her grace bestow
Upon your son the king, her kinsman: whom
She would not, being to her so near of blood,
Forget from charity. No such help it was
Nor no such honest service that your friends
Designed you, who by letters hither writ
To Paget and Mendoza sent as here
Large proffers of strange aid from oversea
To right you by her ruin.

Mary Stuart. Here was nought
Aimed for your queen's destruction: nor is this
Against me to be charged, that foreign friends
Should labour for my liberty. Thus much
At sundry times I have signified aloud
By open message to her, that I would still
Seek mine own freedom. Who shall bar me this?
Who tax me with unreason, that I sent
Unjust conditions on my part to be
To her propounded, which now many times
Have alway found rejection? yea, when even
For hostages I proffered in my stead
To be delivered up with mine own son
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge
That nor your queen nor kingdom should through me
Take aught of damage; so that hence by proof
I see myself utterly from all hope
Already barred of freedom. But I now
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame
And honourable repute are called in doubt
Before such foreign men of law as may
By miserable conclusions of their craft

Draw every thin and shallow circumstance
Out into compass of a consequence:
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate
Of princes are not subject to such laws
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are given
Authority but to look such matters through
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person, yet
Here is the cause so handled, and so far
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith
Which I profess, the immunity and state
Of foreign princes, and their private right
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate
From royal hand to royal, all in one
Are called in question, and myself by force
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity
And made to appear before a judgment-seat
As one held guilty; to none end but this,
All to none other purpose but that I
Might from all natural favour of the queen
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off
From claim hereditary: whereas I stand
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself
Of all objected to me, lest I seem
To have aught neglected in the full defence
Of mine own innocency and honour. This
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how once
This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,
Was drawn in question of conspiracy
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,
With very heart's religion I affirm,
Though I desire the Catholics here might stand

Assured of safety, this I would not yet
Buy with the blood and death of any one.
And on mine own part rather would I play
Esther than Judith; for the people's sake
To God make intercession, than deprive
The meanest of the people born of life.
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud
That I was irreligious: yet the time
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye hold,
But none would suffer me, for all I sought,
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands;
As though they cared not what my soul became.
And now at last, when all ye can ye have done
Against me, and have barred me from my right,
Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and hope.
To God and to the princes of my kin
I make again appeal, from you again
Record my protestation, and reject
All judgment of your court: I had rather die
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,
Than so bring down the height of majesty;
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound
By all the laws of England, even in faith
Of things religious, who could never learn
What manner of laws these were: I am destitute
Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers
To judge my cause through and give doom thereon
I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute queen,
And will do nought which may impair that state
In me nor other princes, nor my son;
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor
Will I sink under my calamity.

My notes are taken from me, and no man
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.
I am clear from all crime done against the queen,
I have stirred not up one man against her: yet,
Albeit of many dangers overpast
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I found
No credit, but have always been contemned,
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When late
Ye made association, and thereon
An act against their lives on whose behalf,
Though innocent even as ignorance of it, aught
Might be contrived to endangering of the queen
From foreign force abroad, or privy plots
At home of close rebellion, I foresaw
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise
Or more than all this for religion's sake,
My many mortal enemies in her court
Should lay upon me all the charge, and I
Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,
I well might take it hardly, nor without
High cause, that such confederacy was made
With mine own son, and I not knowing: but this
I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept
These many years in so strait prison, and grown
Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor
For all most reasonable conditions made
Or proffered to redeem my liberty
Found audience or acceptance: and at last
Here am I set with none to plead for me.
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine

Another meeting there be kept, and I
Be granted on my part an advocate
To hold my cause up; or that seeing ye know
I am a princess, I may be believed
By mine own word, being princely: for should I
Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I see
Are armed against me strong in prejudice,
It were mine extreme folly: more than this,
That ever I came to England in such trust
As of the plighted friendship of your queen
And comfort of her promise. Look, my lords,
Here on this ring: her pledge of love was this
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds
Of mine own rebels once: regard it well:
In trust of this I came amongst you: none
But sees what faith I have found to keep this trust.

Burgh. Whereas I bear a double person, being
Commissioner first, then counsellor in this cause,
From me as from the queen's commissioner here
Receive a few words first. Your protest made
Is now on record, and a transcript of it
Shall be delivered you. To us is given
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified
With the great seal of England; nor are we
With prejudice come hither, but to judge
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,
These the queen's learned counsel here in place
Do level at nothing else but that the truth
May come to light, how far you have made offence
Against the person of the queen. To us
Full power is given to hear and diligently

Examine all the matter, though yourself
Were absent: yet for this did we desire
To have your presence here, lest we might seem
To have derogated from your honour: nor
Designed to object against you anything
But what you knew of, or took part therein,
Against the queen's life bent. For this were these
Your letters brought in question, but to unfold
Your aim against her person, and therewith
All matters to it belonging; which perforce
Are so with other matters interlaced
As none may sever them. Hence was there need
Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,
Whose circumstances do the assurance give
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.
Mary Stuart. The circumstances haply may find
proof,
But the fact never. Mine integrity
Nor on the memory nor the credit hangs
Of these my secretaries, albeit I know
They are men of honest hearts: yet if they have
Confessed in fear of torture anything
Or hope of guerdon and impunity,
It may not be admitted, for just cause,
Which I will otherwhere allege. Men's minds
Are with affections diversly distraught
And borne about of passion: nor would these
Have ever avowed such things against me, save
For their own hope and profit. Letters may
Toward other hands be outwardly addressed
Than they were writ for: yea, and many times
Have many things been privily slipped in mine

Which from my tongue came never. Were I not
Reft of my papers, and my secretary
Kept from me, better might I then confute
These things cast up against me.
Burgh. But there shall
Be nothing brought against you save what last
Stands charged, even since the nineteenth day of June:
Nor would your papers here avail you, seeing
Your secretaries, and Babington himself,
Being of the rack unquestioned, have affirmed
You sent those letters to him; which though yourself
Deny, yet whether more belief should here
On affirmation or negation hang
Let the commissioners judge. But, to come back,
This next I tell you as a counsellor,
Time after time you have put forth many things
Propounded for your freedom; that all these
Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,
And of the Scots; in no wise of the queen.
For first the lords of Scotland, being required,
Flatly refused, to render up the king
In hostage: and when treaty last was held
Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent
By your dependent Morgan privily
To make the queen away by murder.
Mary Stuart. Ah!
You are my adversary.
Burgh. Yea, surely I am
To the queen's adversaries an adversary.
But now hereof enough: let us proceed
Henceforth to proofs.
Mary Stuart. I will not hear them.

Burgh. Yet
Hear them will we.
Mary Stuart. And in another place
I too will hear them, and defend myself.
Gaw. First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,
Wherein you show him there is none other way
For Spain to bring the Netherlands again
To the old obedience, but by setting up
A prince in England that might help his cause:
Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastilier
His forces up for help to invade this land:
And Cardinal Allen's letter, hailing you
His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying
The matter to the Prince of Parma's care
To be commended.
Mary Stuart. I am so sore beset
I know not how by point and circumstance
To meet your manifold impeachments: this
I see through all this charge for evil truth,
That Babington and my two secretaries
Have even to excuse themselves accused me: yet,
As touching that conspiracy, this I say,
Of those six men for execution chosen
I never heard: and all the rest is nought
To this pretended purpose of your charge.
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so
To be esteemed, no more: none save the Pope
Will I acknowledge for the church's head
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of mine:
But in what rank and place I stand esteemed
Of him and foreign princes through the world

I know not: neither can I hinder them
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands
To hail me queen of England. As for those
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secretaries,
These merit no belief. They which have once
Forsworn themselves, albeit they swear again
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn to me
Their secrecy and fidelity before,
And are no subjects of this country. Nau
Hath many times writ other than I bade,
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him write;
But for my part I am ready in all to bear
The burden of their fault, save what may lay
A blot upon mine honour. Haply too
These things did they confess to save themselves;
Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,
Who, being a queen, they thought, good ignorant men,
More favourably must needs be dealt withal.
For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,
But of one Hallard once that proffered me
Such help as I would none of, knowing this man
Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

Gaw. Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ
By Curle, as freely his confession shows,
In privy cipher, take these few brief notes
For perfect witness of your full design.
You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,
Sore troubled what best course to take anew

For your affairs this side the sea, whereon
Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from you
Some certain overtures to Spain and him
In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer
Show freely what he thinks may be obtained
Thus from the king his master. One point more
Have you reserved thereon depending, which
On your behalf you charge him send the king
Some secret word concerning, no man else,
If this be possible, being privy to it:
Even this, that seeing your son's great obstinacy
In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon
Most imminent danger and harm thence like to ensue
To the Catholic church, he coming to bear rule
Within this kingdom, you are resolved at heart
In case your son be not reduced again
To the Catholic faith before your death, whereof
Plainly you say small hope is yours so long
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,
Your claim upon succession to this crown,
By your last will made; praying him on this cause
From that time forth wholly to take yourself
Into his keeping, and therewith the state
And charge of all this country: which, you say,
You cannot for discharge of conscience think
That you could put into a prince's hands
More zealous for your faith, and abler found
To build it strong upon this side again,
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.
But this let silence keep in secret, lest
Being known it be your dowry's loss in France,

And open breach in Scotland with your son,
And in this realm of England utterly
Your ruin and destruction. On your part
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray him
Most earnestly to increase, and gratify
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake
Who hath not for your sake only endured so much
But for the common cause. Likewise, and last,
Is one he knows commended to his charge
With some more full supply to be sustained
Than the entertainment that yourself allot
According to the little means you have.

Burgh. Hereon stands proof apparent of that charge
Which you but now put by, that you design
To give your right supposed upon this realm
Into the Spaniard's hold; and on that cause
Lie now at Rome Allen and Parsons, men
Your servants and our traitors.

Mary Stuart. No such proof
Lives but by witness of revolted men,
My traitors and your helpers; who to me
Have broken their allegiance bound by oath.
When being a prisoner clothed about with cares
I languished out of hope of liberty,
Nor yet saw hope to effect of those things aught
Which many and many looked for at my hands,
Declining now through age and sickness, this
To some seemed good, even for religion's sake,
That the succession here of the English crown
Should or be stablished in the Spanish king

Or in some English Catholic. And a book
Was sent to me to avow the Spaniard's claim;
Which being of me allowed not, some there were
In whose displeasure thence I fell; but now
Seeing all my hope in England desperate grown,
I am fully minded to reject no aid
Abroad, but resolute to receive it.

Walsingham. Sirs,
Bethink you, were the kingdom so conveyed,
What should become of you and all of yours,
Estates and honours and posterities,
Being to such hands delivered.

Burgh. Nay, but these
In no such wise can be conveyed away
By personal will, but by successive right
Still must descend in heritage of law.
Whereto your own words witness, saying if this
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's minds
That are not mad with envying at the truth
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,
This cause is ended.

Mary Stuart. I require again
Before a full and open parliament
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,
I crave a word with some of you apart,
And of this main assembly take farewell.

Act IV

ELIZABETH

Scene I. — *Richmond.*

Walsingham and Davison.

Walsingham. It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds her hand;
His plague upon this people, to preserve
By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known
By proof more potent than approof of law
In all points guilty, but on more than all
Toward all this country dangerous. To take off
From the court held last month at Fotheringay
Authority with so full commission given
To pass upon her judgment — suddenly
Cut short by message of some three lines writ
With hurrying hand at midnight, and despatched
To maim its work upon the second day,
What else may this be in so wise a queen
But madness, as a brand to sear the brain
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now
That she receives the French ambassador
With one more special envoy from his king,
Except their message touch her spleen with fire
And so undo itself, we cannot tell
What doubt may work upon her. Had we but

Some sign more evident of some private seal
Confirming toward her by more personal proof
The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this
As for our country plucked from imminent death
We might thank God: but with such gracious words
Of piteous challenge and imperial plea
She hath wrought by letter on our mistress' mind,
We may not think her judgment so could slip,
Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,
As to leave bare her bitter root of heart
And core of evil will there labouring.

Davison. Yet
I see no shade of other surety cast
From any sign of likelihood. It were
Not shameful more than dangerous, though she bade,
To have her prisoner privily made away;
Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed hereon
When aught may seem to fix it; then as fast
Wavers, but veers to that bad point again
Whence blowing the wind blows down her honour, nor
Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

Wal. Ay,
We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge
Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,
Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat
Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

Enter Queen Elizabeth, attended by Burghley, Leicester, Hunsdon, Hatton, and others of the Council.

Elizabeth. No, my lords,
We are not so weak of wit as men that need
Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us not
That we accuse your friendship on this cause

Of too much fearfulness: France we will hear,
Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid them in.

Enter Châteauneuf and Bellièvre, attended.

From our fair cousin of France what message, sirs?

Bellièvre. I, madam, have in special charge to lay
The king's mind open to your majesty,
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech more free
Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,
The counsels of your highness' enemies,
Than doth the king of France: wherein how far
The queen your prisoner have borne part, or may
Seem of their works partaker, he can judge
Nought: but much less the king may understand
What men may stand accusers, who rise up
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law
May lay their charges on a subject: but
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of France,
And sister made by wedlock to the king,
To none being subject, can be judged of none
Without such violence done on rule as breaks
Prerogative of princes. Nor may man
That looks upon your present majesty
In such clear wise apparent, and retains
Remembrance of your name through all the world
For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,

Being set so high in fame, can so forget
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are wrought
Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy
As makes all metal up of meaner men.
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe
Were from all time toward kingship merely vain,
And state no more worth reverence, yet the plea
Were nought which here your ministers pretend,
That while the queen of Scots lives you may live
No day that knows not danger. Were she dead,
Rather might then your peril wax indeed
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your land,
For this queen's love, but rather for their faith's,
Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,
Could be but furthered, and its enterprise
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext; yea,
You shall but draw the invasion on this land
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and bring
Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth
The queen of Scots hath for your person been
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught
All intercepted shafts against your state
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath
To smite your adversary, is cast away,
And no mean left therein for menace. If
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit
There were that counselled this, her death will make
Your enemies weapons of their own despair
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge

More plausibly to strike more perilously.
Your grace is known for strong in foresight: we
These nineteen years of your wise reign have kept
Fast watch in France upon you: of those claims
Which lineally this queen here prisoner may
Put forth on your succession have you made
The stoutest rampire of your rule: and this
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause
Who shift the base whereon their policies lean
Bows down toward ruin: and of loyal heart
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been
Given me for truth assured of one whose place
Affirms him honourable, how openly
A certain prince's minister that well
May stand in your suspicion says abroad
That for his master's greatness it were good
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing
He is well assured the Catholics here should then
All wholly range them on his master's part.
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily,
Who have loved fair temperance more than violence: now,
While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think
What name shall yours be found in time far hence,
Even as you deal with her that in your hand
Lies not more subject than your fame to come
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

Eliz. I am sorry, sir, you are hither come from France
Upon no better errand. I appeal
To God for judge between my cause and hers

Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine
The queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein
Hath never found but kindness; for which grace
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.
No grief that on this head yet ever fell
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear
As this last plot upon it. I have read
As deep I doubt me in as many books
As any queen or prince in Christendom,
Yet never chanced on aught so strange and sad
As this my state's calamity. Mine own life
Is by mere nature precious to myself,
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.
I am a poor lone woman, girt about
With secret enemies that perpetually
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king
Why have not I my traitor to my hands
Delivered up, who now this second time
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan? On my part,
Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here conspired
Against the French king's life, he had found not so
Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake
From the edge of law protection: and this cause
Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

Bell. Madam, there stand against the queen of Scots
Already here in England on this charge
So many and they so dangerous witnesses
No need can be to bring one over more:
Nor can the king show such unnatural heart
As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly

My lord expects your resolution: which
If we receive as given against his plea,
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more
I pray your highness be assured, and so
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her life,
And not my lord alone but all that reign
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands
Against all scathe of all conspiracies
Made on her party: while such remedies' ends
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of them
Which so men thought to medicine. To refrain
From that red-handed way of rule, and set
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity
That would reign long: nor will my lord believe
Your highness could put off yourself so much
As to reverse and tread upon the law
That you thus long have kept and honourably:
But should this perilous purpose hold right on,
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king
Will not regard as liable to your laws
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold
Her death as but the general wrong of kings
And no more his than as his brethren's all,
But as his own and special injury done,
More than to these injurious.

Eliz. Doth your lord
Bid you speak thus?

Bell. Ay, madam: from his mouth
Had I command what speech to use.
Eliz. You have done
Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,
You shall not presently depart this land
As one denied of mere discourtesy.
I will return an envoy of mine own
To speak for me at Paris with the king.
You shall bear back a letter from my hand,
And give your lord assurance, having seen,
I cannot be so frighted with men's threats
That they shall not much rather move my mind
To quicken than to slack the righteous doom
Which none must think by menace to put back,
Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.
Exeunt Ambassadors.

I were as one belated with false lights
If I should think to steer my darkling way
By twilight furtherance of their wiles and words.
Think you, my lords, France yet would have her live?
Burghley. If there be other than the apparent end
Hid in this mission to your majesty,
Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,
Who deal for me at Paris: fear of Spain
Lays double hand as 'twere upon the king,
Lest by removal of the queen of Scots
A way be made for peril in the claim
More potent then of Philip; and if there come
From his Farnese note of enterprise
Or danger this way tending, France will yet
Cleave to your friendship though his sister die.

Eliz. So, in your mind, this half-souled brother would
Steer any way that might keep safe his sail
Against a southern wind, which here, he thinks,
Her death might strengthen from the north again
To blow against him off our subject straits,
Made servile then and Spanish? Yet perchance
There swells behind our seas a heart too high
To bow more easily down, and bring this land
More humbly to such handling, than their waves
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their storms
To breath of any lord on earth but God.
What thinks our cousin?

Hunsdon. That if Spain or France
Or both be stronger than the heart in us
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,
In God's name, let them rise and make their prey
Of what was England: but if neither be,
The smooth-cheeked French man-harlot, nor that hand
Which holp to light Rome's fires with English limbs,
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong
A pestilence here alive in England, which
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope
With heat that kindles treason.

Eliz. By this light,
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's tongue
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.
How say you, Dudley, to it?

Leicester. Madam, ere this
You have had my mind upon the matter, writ
But late from Holland, that no public stroke
Should fall upon this princess, who may be

By privy death more happily removed
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave
A sign against your judgment, to call down
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kinship wrought
Though right were done to justice.
Eliz. Of your love
We know it is that comes this counsel; nor,
Had we such friends of all our servants, need
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous doubts
That find no screen from dangers. Yet meseems
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there were
Of aught from Scotland ever: Walsingham,
You should have there intelligence whereof
To make these lords with us partakers.
Wal. Nay,
Madam, no more than from a trustless hand
Protest and promise: of those twain that come
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,
He that in counsel on this cause was late
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid
By draught of secret death this queen away,
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have said
In open audience, but by personal note
Hath given me this to know, that howsoe'er
His king indeed desire her life be spared
Much may be wrought upon him, would your grace
More richly line his ragged wants with gold
And by full utterance of your parliament
Approve him heir in England.
Eliz. Ay! no more?
God's blood! what grace is proffered us at need,
And on what mild conditions! Say I will not

Redeem such perils at so dear a price,
Shall not our pensioner too join hands with France
And pay my gold with iron barter back
At edge of sword he dares not look upon,
They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took
Even in this woman's womb when shot and steel
Undid the manhood in his veins unborn
And left his tongue's threats handless?
Wal. Men there be
Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,
For pride of country and high-heartedness,
To see the king they serve your servant so
That not his mother's life and once their queen's
Being at such point of peril can enforce
One warlike word of his for chance of war
Conditional against you. Word came late
From Edinburgh that there the citizens
With hoot and hiss had bayed him through the streets
As he went heartless by; of whom they had heard
This published saying, that in his personal mind
The blood of kindred or affinity
So much not binds us as the friendship pledged
To them that are not of our blood: and this
Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war
Shall breathe from him against us though she die,
Except his titular claim be reft from him
On our succession: and that all his mind
Is but to reign unpartnered with a power
Which should weigh down that half his kingdom's weight
Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:
And for his mother, this would he desire,
That she were kept from this day to her death

Close prisoner in one chamber, never more
To speak with man or woman: and hereon
That proclamation should be made of her
As of one subject formally declared
To the English law whereby, if she offend
Again with iterance of conspiracy,
She shall not as a queen again be tried,
But as your vassal and a private head
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

Eliz. She is bounden to him as he long since to her,
Who would have given his kingdom up at least
To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand
How safe had lain his life too, doubt may guess,
Which yet kept dark her purpose then on him,
Dark now no more to usward. Think you then
That they belie him, whose suspicion saith
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,
If from that brother-in-law that was of ours
And would have been our bridegroom he may win
Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic lords
Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than ours,
Being harried more of heretics, as they say,
Than these within our borders, to root out
The creed there stablished now, and do to death
Its ministers, with all the lords their friends,
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule
As prince upon their party? since he fain
From ours would be divided, and cast in
His lot with Rome against us too, from these
Might he but earn assurance of their faith,
Revolting from his own. May these things be

More than mere muttering breath of trustless lies,
And half his heart yet hover toward our side
For all such hope or purpose?
Wal. Of his heart
We know not, madam, surely; nor doth he
Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,
And writes to excuse him of his message here
On her behalf apparent, but in sooth
Aimed otherwise; the Master I mean of Gray,
Who swears me here by letter, if he be not
True to the queen of England, he is content
To have his head fall on a scaffold: saying,
To put from him this charge of embassy
Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it
Is modest and not menacing: whereto
If you will yield not yet to spare the life
So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well
You should be pleased by some commission given
To stay by the way his comrade and himself,
Or bid them back.
Eliz. What man is this then, sent
With such a knave to fellow?
Wal. No such knave,
But still your prisoner's friend of old time found:
Sir Robert Melville.
Eliz. And an honest man
As faith might wish her servants: but what pledge
Will these produce me for security
That I may spare this dangerous life and live
Unscathed of after practice?
Wal. As I think,
The king's self and his whole nobility

Will be her personal pledges; and her son,
If England yield her to his hand in charge,
On no less strait a bond will undertake
For her safe keeping.
Eliz. That were even to arm
With double power mine adversary, and make him
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt —
Were he mine adversary indeed: which yet
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean
For me to live unhurt and save her life,
It shall well please me. Say this king of Scots
Himself would give his own inheritance up
Pretended in succession, if but once
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers
Again put forth upon me for her sake,
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied
Of lords and commons then to let her live.
But this I doubt he had rather take her life
Himself than yield up to us for pledge: and less,
These men shall know of me, I will not take
In price of her redemption: which were else,
And haply may in no wise not be held,
To this my loyal land and mine own trust
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more dire
Than noise of fleets invasive.
Wal. Surely so
Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land
That are not enemies of the land and yours;
For ere the doom had been proclaimed an hour
Which gave to death your main foe's head and theirs
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake forth
From all your people: how their church-towers all

Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells
The day that bore such tidings, and the night
That laughed aloud with lightning of their joy
And thundered round its triumph: twice twelve hours
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and shone
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's foam
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth
And sound as of one trumpet: not a tongue
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not up,
Save of your traitors and their country's: these
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in close,
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's eye,
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness, whence
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

Eliz. Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of. By God's light,
Be it most in love of me or fear of her
I know not, but my people seems in sooth
Hot and an hungered on this trail of hers:
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein
Who bleeds to death unweaponed: our good hounds
Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,
But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,
To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not: yet
Their hearts are hotter on this course than mine,
Which most was deadliest aimed at.

Wal. Even for that
How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell
To burn your danger up and slay that soul
Alive that seeks it? Thinks your majesty

There beats a heart where treason hath not turned
All English blood to poison, which would feel
No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it
To hear of yours endangered than to feel
A sword against its own life bent, or know
Death imminent as darkness overhead
That takes the noon from one man's darkening eye
As must your death from all this people's? You
Are very England: in your light of life
This living land of yours walks only safe,
And all this breathing people with your breath
Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse in
Freedom: your eye is light of theirs, your word
As God's to comfort England, whose whole soul
Is made with yours one, and her witness you
That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her
Again till God be wroth with us so much
As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet
Lights all your land that looks on it, and gives
Assurance higher than danger dares assail
Save in this lady's name and service, who
Must now from you take judgment.

Eliz. Must! by God,
I know not *must* but as a word of mine,
My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar. Sirs,
Content yourselves to know this much of us,
Or having known remember, that we sent
The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale
To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the doom
Confirmed on second trial against her, saying
Her word can weigh not down the weightier guilt
Approved upon her, and by parliament

Since fortified with sentence. Yea, my lords,
Ye should forget not how by message then
I bade her know of me with what strong force
Of strenuous and invincible argument
I am urged to hold no more in such delay
The process of her execution, being
The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,
Their author and chief motive: and am told
That if I yield not mine the guilt must be
In God's and in the whole world's suffering sight
Of all the miseries and calamities
To ensue on my refusal: whence, albeit
I know not yet how God shall please to incline
My heart on that behalf, I have thought it meet
In conscience yet that she should be forewarned,
That so she might bethink her of her sins
Done both toward God offensive and to me
And pray for grace to be true penitent
For all these faults: which, had the main fault reached
No further than mine own poor person, God
Stands witness with what truth my heart protests
I freely would have pardoned. She to this
Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart
All we may wreak our worst upon her; whom
Having to death condemned, we may fulfil
Our wicked work, and God in Paradise
With just atonement shall requite her. This
Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,
Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer, desired
To crave of us forgiveness: and thereon
Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this point home
That by her mean the Catholics here had learnt

To hold her for their sovereign, on which cause
Nor my religion nor myself might live
Uncharged with danger while her life should last
She answering gives God thanks aloud to be
Held of so great account upon his side,
And in God's cause and in the church of God's
Rejoicingly makes offering of her life;
Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,
Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or yield
At least for you to take it. Yet, being told
It is not for religion she must die,
But for a plot by compass of her own
Laid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts
Again this answer barbed with mockery back,
She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire
To two such ends yet ever: yea, so far
She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,
She would not have me suffer by her will
The fillip of a finger: though herself
Be persecuted even as David once
And her mishap be that she cannot so
Fly by the window forth as David: whence
It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks
Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,
Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,
Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,
As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,
If England might but by my death attain
A state more flourishing with a better prince,
Gladly would I lay down my life; who have
No care save only for my people's sake
To keep it: for myself, in all the world

I see no great cause why for all this coil
I should be fond to live or fear to die.
If I should say unto you that I mean
To grant not your petition, by my faith,
More should I so say haply than I mean:
Or should I say I mean to grant it, this
Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind
More than is fit for you to know: and thus
I must for all petitionary prayer
Deliver you an answer answerless.
Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind
That being illumined it may thence foresee
What for his church and all this commonwealth
May most be profitable: and this once known,
My hand shall halt not long behind his will.

Scene II. — *Fotheringay.*

Sir Amyas Paulet and Sir Drew Drury.

Paulet. I never gave God heartier thanks than these
I give to have you partner of my charge
Now most of all, these letters being to you
No less designed than me, and you in heart
One with mine own upon them. Certainly,
When I put hand to pen this morning past
That Master Davison by mine evidence
Might note what sore disquietudes I had
To increase my griefs before of body and mind,
I looked for no such word to cut off mine
As these to us both of Walsingham's and his.
Would rather yet I had cause to still complain

Of those unanswered letters two months past
Than thus be certified of such intents
As God best knoweth I never sought to know,
Or search out secret causes: though to hear
Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,
In me some hard conceits against myself,
I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed
Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall be
Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the queen
By those seditious rumours whose report
Blows fear among the people lest our charge
Escape our trust, or as they term it now
Be taken away, — such apprehensive tongues
So phrase it, — and her freedom strike men's hearts
More deep than all these flying fears that say
London is fired of Papists, or the Scots
Have crossed in arms the Border, or the north
Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise
Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now
In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet —
All which, albeit but footless floating lies,
May all too easily smite and work too far
Even on the heart most royal in the world
That ever was a woman's.

Drury. Good my friend,
These noises come without a thunderbolt
In such dense air of dusk expectancy
As all this land lies under; nor will some
Doubt or think much to say of those reports
They are broached and vented of men's credulous mouths
Whose ears have caught them from such lips as meant
Merely to strike more terror in the queen

And wring that warrant from her hovering hand
Which falters yet and flutters on her lip
While the hand hangs and trembles half advanced
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer said,
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it was
More than a full month old and four days more
When he so looked to hear the word of it
Which yet lies sealed of silence.
Paul. Will you say
Or any as wise and loyal, say or think
It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,
They have raised this hue and cry upon her flight
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield spread
Of proclamation to detain all ships
And lay all highways for her day and night,
And send like precepts out four manner of ways
From town to town, to make in readiness
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,
On pain of death, for London by report
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore praised,
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way
To levy forces for the achieving that
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.
Drury. Why, in such mighty matters and such mists
Wise men may think what hardly fools would say,
And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath leave
To give commission for the babbling tongue
Aloud to cry they have seen. This noise that was
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence

Fear flew last week all round us, gave but note
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and words
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon
More solid than a shadow.
Paul. Nay, he was
Escaped indeed: and every day thus brings
Forth its new mischief: as this last month did
Those treasons of the French ambassador
Designed against our mistress, which God's grace
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they sought
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand earn
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year
To his most hellish hire. You will not say
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought
By fear or cloudy falsehood?
Drury. I will say
No more or surelier than I know: and this
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with lies,
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of truth,
And each of these pass current: but of these
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who gave
Word of his own temptation by these French
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed
He held it godly cunning to comply
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight
Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who
Being thence released might readily, as he said,
Even by such means as once this lady's lord
Was made away with, make the queen away
With powder fired beneath her bed — why, this,

Good sooth, I guess not; but I doubt the man
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,
More fool than traitor; most of all intent
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's purse
With tricks of mere effrontery: thus at least
We know did Walsingham esteem of him:
And if by Davison held of more account,
Or merely found more serviceable, and made
A mean to tether up those quick French tongues
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's life,
I cannot tell, and care not. Though the queen
Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight
Forth of the kingdom, and committed him
To ward within the Tower while Châteauneuf
Himself should come before a council held
At my lord treasurer's, where being thus accused
At first he cared not to confront the man,
But stood upon his office, and the charge
Of his king's honour and prerogative —
Then bade bring forth the knave, who being brought forth
Outfaced him with insistence front to front
And took the record of this whole tale's truth
Upon his soul's damnation, challenging
The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,
That of his own mouth had this witness been
Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea
Directly drawn to treason: which awhile
Struck dumb the ambassador as amazed with wrath,
Till presently, the accuser being removed,
He made avowal this fellow some while since
Had given his secretary to wit there lay
One bound in Newgate who being thence released

Would take the queen's death on his hand: whereto
Answering, he bade the knave avoid his house
On pain, if once their ways should cross, to be
Sent bound before the council: who replied
He had done foul wrong to take no further note,
But being made privy to this damned device
Keep close its perilous knowledge; whence the queen
Might well complain against him; and hereon
They fell to wrangling on this cause, that he
Professed himself to no man answerable
For declaration or for secret held
Save his own master: so that now is gone
Sir William Wade to Paris, not with charge
To let the king there know this queen shall live,
But to require the ambassador's recall
And swift delivery of our traitors there
To present justice: yet may no man say,
For all these half-faced scares and policies,
Here was more sooth than seeming.

Paul. Why, these crafts
Were shameful then as fear's most shameful self,
If thus your wit read them aright; and we
Should for our souls and lives alike do ill
To jeopard them on such men's surety given
As make no more account of simple faith
Than true men make of liars: and these are they,
Our friends and masters, that rebuke us both
By speech late uttered of her majesty
For lack of zeal in service and of care
She looked for at our hands, in that we have not
In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves
Found out some way to cut this queen's life off,

Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives,
She is hourly subject unto: saying, she notes,
Besides a kind of lack of love to her,
Herein we have not that particular care
Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed
Of the faith rather and the general good,
That politic reason bids; especially,
Having so strong a warrant and such ground
For satisfaction of our consciences
To Godward, and discharge of credit kept
And reputation toward the world, as is
That oath whereby we stand associated
To prosecute inexorably to death
Both with our joint and our particular force
All by whose hand and all on whose behalf
Our sovereign's life is struck at: as by proof
Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they write,
As though the queen's own will had warranted
The words that by her will's authority
Were blotted from the bond, whereby that head
Was doomed on whose behoof her life should be
By treason threatened: for she would not have
Aught pass which grieved her subjects' consciences,
She said, or might abide not openly
The whole world's view: nor would she any one
Were punished for another's fault: and so
Cut off the plea whereon she now desires
That we should dip our secret hands in blood
With no direction given of her own mouth
So to pursue that dangerous head to death
By whose assent her life were sought: for this
Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,

And this we have not, but her word instead
She takes it most unkindly toward herself
That men professing toward her loyally
That love that we do should in any sort,
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of one
So near herself in blood as is this queen,
And one with her in sex and quality.
And these respects, they find, or so profess,
Do greatly trouble her: who hath sundry times
Protested, they assure us, earnestly,
That if regard of her good subjects' risk
Did not more move her than the personal fear
Of proper peril to her, she never would
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding:
And so to our good judgments they refer
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint us with
As passed but lately from her majesty,
And to God's guard commend us: which God knows
We should much more need than deserve of him
Should we give ear to this, and as they bid
Make heretics of these papers; which three times
You see how Davison hath enforced on us:
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass
Back to his hands till copies writ of them
Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep
In witness how their father dealt herein.

Drury. You have done the wiselier: and what word soe'er
Shall bid them know your mind, I am well assured
It well may speak for me too.

Paul. Thus it shall:

That having here his letters in my hands,
I would not fail, according to his charge,
To send back answer with all possible speed
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief
And bitterness of mind, in that I am
So much unhappy as I hold myself
To have lived to look on this unhappy day,
When I by plain direction am required
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to do
An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,
Held at her disposition, and myself
Am ready so to lose them this next day
If it shall please her so, acknowledging
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not
Desire them to enjoy them but so long
As her great grace gives leave: but God forbid
That I should make for any grace of hers
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or
Leave ever to my poor posterity
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust
That she, of her accustomed clemency,
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,
By his good mediation, as returned
From one who never will be less in love,
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,
Than any Christian subject living, thus
To God's grace I commit him.

Drury. Though I doubt
She haply shall be much more wroth hereat
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade

God treblefold reward you for your charge
So well discharged, saluting you by name
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do
Most like a wise man loyally to write
But such good words as these, whereto myself
Subscribe in heart: though being not named herein
(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)
Nor this directed to me, I forbear
To make particular answer. And indeed,
Were danger less apparent in her life
To the heart's life of all this living land,
I would this woman might not die at all
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

Paul. I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,
When I shall see the murderous cause removed
Of its most mortal peril: nor desire
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,
Besides her commendations of my faith
For spotless actions and for safe regards,
Than to see judgment on her enemy done;
Which were for me that recompense indeed
Whereof she writes as one not given to all,
But for such merit reserved to crown its claim
Above all common service: nor save this
Could any treasure's promise in the world
So ease those travails and rejoice this heart
That hers too much takes thought of, as to read
Her charge to carry for her sake in it
This most just thought, that she can balance not
The value that her grace doth prize me at
In any weight of judgment: yet it were

A word to me more comfortable at heart
Than these, though these most gracious, that should speak
Death to her death's contriver.

Drury. Nay, myself
Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her
Removed that makes it: yet such things will pluck
Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and move
Compassion that such long strange years should find
So strange an end: nor shall men ever say
But she was born right royal; full of sins,
It may be, and by circumstance or choice
Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,
Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,
In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,
So of all violent things inviolable,
So large of courage, so superb of soul,
So sheathed with iron mind invincible
And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy —
By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
Change, or all confluence of calamities —
And so at her worst need beloved, and still,
Naked of help and honour when she seemed,
As other women would be, and of hope
Stripped, still so of herself adorable
By minds not always all ignobly mad
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,
She shall be a world's wonder to all time,
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men
Not without praise, not without noble tears,
And if without what she would never have
Who had it never, pity — yet from none

Quite without reverence and some kind of love
For that which was so royal. Yea, and now
That at her prayer we here attend on her,
If, as I think, she have in mind to send
Aught written to the queen, what we may do
To further her desire shall on my part
Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves
Be nought akin to danger.

Paul. It shall be
The first of all then craved by her of man,
Or by man's service done her, that was found
So harmless ever.

Enter Mary Stuart and Mary Beaton.

Mary Stuart. Sirs, in time past by
I was desirous many times, ye know,
To have written to your queen: but since I have had
Advertisement of my conviction, seeing
I may not look for life, my soul is set
On preparation for another world:
Yet none the less, not for desire of life,
But for my conscience's discharge and rest,
And for my last farewell, I have at heart
By you to send her a memorial writ
Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I
Shall presently be gone out of this world.
And to remove from her, if such be there,
Suspicion of all danger in receipt
Of this poor paper that should come from me,
Myself will take the assay of it, and so
With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

Paul. Will you not also, madam, be content

To seal and close it in my presence up?
Mary Stuart. Sir, willingly: but I beseech your word
Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.
Paul. I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.
Mary Stuart. This further promise I desire, you will
Procure me from above certificate
It hath been there delivered.
Drury. This is more
Than we may stand so pledged for: in our power
It is to send, but far beyond our power,
As being above our place, to promise you
Certificate or warrant.
Mary Stuart. Yet I trust
Consideration may be had of me
After my death, as one derived in blood
From your queen's grandsire, with all mortal rites
According with that faith I have professed
All my life-days as I was born therein.
This is the sum of all mine askings: whence
Well might I take it in ill part of you
To wish me seal my letter in your sight,
Bewraying your hard opinion of me.
Paul. This
Your own words well might put into my mind,
That so beside my expectation made
Proffer to take my first assay for me
Of the outer part of it: for you must think
I was not ignorant that by sleight of craft
There might be as great danger so conveyed
Within the letter as without, and thus
I could not for ill thoughts of you be blamed,
Concurring with you in this jealousy:

For had yourself not moved it of yourself
Sir Drew nor I had ever thought on it.
Mary Stuart. The occasion why I moved it was but this,
That having made my custom in time past
To send sometimes some tokens to your queen,
At one such time that I sent certain clothes
One standing by advised her cause my gifts
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them; which
I have since observed, and taken order thus
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court,
To do the like to a fur-fringed counterpane
Which at that time I sent: and as for this,
Look what great danger lies between these leaves
That I dare take and handle in my hands,
And press against my face each part of them
Held open thus, and either deadly side,
Wherein your fear smells death sown privily.
Paul. Madam, when so you charged your secretary
Her majesty was far from doubt, I think,
Or dream of such foul dealing: and I would
Suspicion since had found no just cause given,
And then things had not been as now they are.
Mary Stuart. But things are as they are, and here I stand
Convicted, and not knowing how many hours
I have to live yet.
Paul. Madam, you shall live
As many hours as God shall please: but this
May be said truly, that you here have been
Convicted in most honourable sort
And favourable.
Mary Stuart. What favour have I found?
Paul. Your cause hath been examined scrupulously

By many our eldest nobles of this realm,
Whereas by law you should but have been tried
By twelve men as a common person.
Mary Stuart. Nay,
Your noblemen must by their peers be tried.
Paul. All strangers of what quality soe'er
In matter of crime are only to be tried
In other princes' territories by law
That in that realm bears rule.
Mary Stuart. You have your laws:
But other princes all will think of it
As they see cause; and mine own son is now
No more a child, but come to man's estate,
And he will think of these things bitterly.
Drury. Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,
Is odious to all persons, but of all
In mightiest personages most specially
Most hateful; and it will not be denied
But that the queen's grace greatly hath deserved
Both of yourself and of your son.
Mary Stuart. What boon
Shall I acknowledge? Being in bonds, I am set
Free from the world, and therefore am I not
Afraid to speak; I have had the favour here
To have been kept prisoner now these many years
Against my will and justice.
Paul. Madam, this
Was a great favour, and without this grace
You had not lived to see these days.
Mary Stuart. How so?
Paul. Seeing your own subjects did pursue you, and had
The best in your own country.

Mary Stuart. That is true,
Because your Mildmay's ill persuasions first
Made me discharge my forces, and then caused
Mine enemies to burn my friends' main holds,
Castles and houses.
Paul. Howsoe'er, it was
By great men of that country that the queen
Had earnest suit made to her to have yourself
Delivered to them, which her grace denied,
And to their great misliking.
Drury. Seventeen years
She hath kept your life to save it: and whereas
She calls your highness sister, she hath dealt
In truth and deed most graciously with you
And sisterlike, in seeking to preserve
You life at once and honour.
Mary Stuart. Ay! wherein?
Drury. In that commission of your causes held
At York, which was at instance of your friends
Dissolved to save your honour.
Mary Stuart. No: the cause
Why that commission was dissolved indeed
Was that my friends could not be heard to inform
Against my loud accusers.
Paul. But your friend
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed
All only in your favour: and his book
Is extant: and this favour is but one
Of many graces which your majesty
Hath for mere love extended to you.
Mary Stuart. This

Is one great favour, even to have kept me here
So many years against my will.
Paul. It was
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end
Required to have you yielded up to them,
As was before said.
Mary Stuart. Nay, then, I will speak.
I am not afraid. It was determined here
That I should not depart: and when I was
Demanded by my subjects, this I know,
That my lord treasurer with his own close hand
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,
But here she should be safely kept.
Drury. That earl
Was even as honourable a gentleman
As I knew ever in that country bred.
Mary Stuart. One of the worst men of the world he was:
A foul adulterer, one of general lust,
A spoiler and a murderer.
Drury. Six weeks long,
As I remember, here I saw him; where
He bore him very gravely, and maintained
The reputation even on all men's tongues
In all things of a noble gentleman:
Nor have I heard him evil spoken of
Till this time ever.
Mary Stuart. Yea, my rebels here

Are honest men, and by the queen have been
Maintained.
Paul. You greatly do forget yourself
To charge her highness with so foul a fault,
Which you can never find ability
To prove on her.
Mary Stuart. What did she with the French,
I pray you, at Newhaven?
Paul. It appears
You have conceived so hardly of the queen
My mistress, that you still inveterately
Interpret all her actions to the worst,
Not knowing the truth of all the cause: but yet
I dare assure you that her majesty
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect
As well of Calais as for other ends,
To do the thing she did, and more to have done
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power:
And this is in you great unthankfulness
After so many favours and so great,
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise
The least of any: though her majesty
Hath of her own grace merely saved your life,
To the utter discontentment of the best
Your subjects once in open parliament
Who craved against you justice on the charge
Of civil law-breach and rebellion.
Mary Stuart. I
Know no such matter, but full well I know
Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,
Since his abiding last in Scotland, said
That I should rue his entertainment there.

Paul. Madam, you have not rued it, but have been
More honourably entertained than ever yet
Was any other crown's competitor
In any realm save only this: whereof
Some have been kept close prisoners, other some
Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some
Murdered.
Mary Stuart. But I was no competitor:
All I required was in successive right
To be reputed but as next the crown.
Paul. Nay, madam, you went further, when you gave
The English arms and style, as though our queen
Had been but an usurper on your right.
Mary Stuart. My husband and my kinsmen did therein
What they thought good: I had nought to do with it.
Paul. Why would you not then loyally renounce
Your claim herein pretended, but with such
Condition, that you might be authorized
Next heir apparent to the crown?
Mary Stuart. I have made
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which
Could never be accepted.
Paul. Heretofore
It hath been proved unto you presently
That in the very instant even of all
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were
Some dangerous crafts discovered.
Mary Stuart. You must think
I have some friends on earth, and if they have done
Anything privily, what is that to me?
Paul. Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I would
For your own sake you had forborne it, that

After advertisement and conscience given
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain
The murderer as your servant.
Mary Stuart. I might do it
With as good right as ever did your queen
So entertain my rebels.
Drury. Be advised:
This speech is very hard, and all the case
Here differs greatly.
Mary Stuart. Yea, let this then be;
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say
But I by partial judgment was condemned,
And the commissioners knew my son could have
No right, were I convicted, and your queen
Could have no children of her womb; whereby
They might set up what man for king they would.
Paul. This is in you too great forgetfulness
Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords
With two so foul and horrible faults, as first
To take your life by partial doom from you,
And then bestow the kingdom where they liked.
Mary Stuart. Well, all is one to me: and for my part
I thank God I shall die without regret
Of anything that I have done alive.
Paul. I would entreat you yet be sorry at least
For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,
You have done the queen my mistress.
Mary Stuart. Nay, thereon
Let others answer for themselves: I have
Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in mind

Those matters of my monies that we last
Conferred upon together?
Paul. Madam, these
Are not forgotten.
Mary Stuart. Well it is if aught
Be yet at all remembered for my good.
Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,
And so farewell — or even as here men may.
Exeunt Paulet and Drury.
Had I that old strength in my weary limbs
That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I
Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,
But not so lame in spirit I might not take
Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun
This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet
Were now no firmer nor more hopeful found
Than when I went but in my chair abroad
Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand
And go now without help of either side,
And bend my hand again, thou seest, to write:
I did not well perchance in sight of these
To have made so much of this lame hand, which yet
God knows was grievous to me, and to-day
To make my letter up and superscribe
And seal it with no outward show of pain
Before their face and inquisition; yet
I care not much in player's wise piteously
To blind such eyes with feigning: though this Drew
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate
And liker to be wrought on; but at last
What need have I of men?
Mary Beaton. What then you may

I know not, seeing for all that was and is
We are yet not at the last; but when you had,
You have hardly failed to find more help of them
And heartier service than more prosperous queens
Exact of expectation: when your need
Was greater than your name or natural state,
And wage was none to look for but of death,
As though the expectancy thereof and hope
Were more than man's prosperities, men have given
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and you
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

Mary Stuart. Ay, one said once it must be — some one said
I must be perilous ever, and my love
More deadly than my will was evil or good
Toward any of all these that through me should die
I know not who, nor when one said it: but
I know too sure he lied not.

Mary Beaton. No; I think
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men
That under imminence of death grew strong
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past
Could see no foot before them, nor provide
For their own fate or fortune anything
Against one angry chance of accident
Or passionate fault of their own loves or hates
That might to death betray them: such an one
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had
No strength to save himself.

Mary Stuart. I know not: yet
Time was when I remembered.

Mary Beaton. It should be
No enemy's saying whom you remember not;
You are wont not to forget your enemies; yet
The word rang sadder than a friend's should fall
Save in some strange pass of the spirit of flesh
For love's sake haply hurt to death.
Mary Stuart. It seems
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me
That of myself I know not.
Mary Beaton. Nay, my mind
Has other thoughts to beat upon: for me
It may suffice to know the saying for true
And never care who said it.
Mary Stuart. True? too sure,
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it. See,
Nor Scott nor Englishman that takes on him
The service of my sorrow but partakes
The sorrow of my service: man by man,
As that one said, they perish of me: yea,
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague
Bred of aërial poison, I could be
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,
Who where I would can hurt not: Percy died
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,
These young men with strange torments done to death,
Who should have rid me and the world of her
That is our scourge, and to the church of God
A pestilence that wastes it: all the north
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel
Since its last rising: nay, she saith but right,
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues
I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,

And a sword follows at my heel, and fire
Is kindled of mine eyeshot: and before,
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom
That I would save might I deliver, when
I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged
Friendship? I should have died, I think long since,
That many might have died not, and this word
Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,
But perished in the saying, a prophecy
That took the prophet by the throat and slew —
As sure I think it slew him. Such a song
Might my poor servant slain before my face
Have sung before the stroke of violent death
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.
Mary Beaton. Ah!
You think so? this remembrance was it not
That hung and hovered in your mind but now,
Moved your heart backward all unwittingly
To some blind memory of the man long dead?
Mary Stuart. In sooth, I think my prophet should have been
David.
Mary Beaton. You thought of him?
Mary Stuart. An old sad thought:
The moan of it was made long since, and he
Not unremembered.
Mary Beaton. Nay, of him indeed
Record was made — a royal record: whence
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.
Mary Stuart. I would forget no friends nor enemies: these
More needs me now remember. Think'st thou not
This woman hates me deadlier — or this queen

That is not woman — than myself could hate
Except I were as she in all things? then
I should love no such woman as am I
Much more than she may love me: yet I am sure,
Or so near surety as all belief may be,
She dare not slay me for her soul's sake: nay,
Though that were made as light of as a leaf
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state
As blow between us like a blast of death,
For her throne's sake she durst not, which must be
Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God wot,
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in by chance
Might weigh my life down in the scale her hand
Holds hardly straight for trembling; if she be
Woman at all, so tempered naturally
And with such spirit and sense as thou and I,
Should I for wrath so far forget myself
As these men sometime charge me that I do,
My tongue might strike my head off. By this head
That yet I wear to swear by, if life be
Thankworthy, God might well be thanked for this
Of me or whoso loves me in the world,
That I spake never half my heart out yet,
For any sore temptation of them all,
To her or hers; nor ever put but once
My heart upon my paper, writing plain
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth of her,
Believed or feigned — nay, feigned not to believe
Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed praise,
And that vain ravin of her sexless lust
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger, curb
With patience nor allay with love the thirst

That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it. Ha,
What might the reading of these truths have wrought
Within her maiden mind, what seed have sown,
Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge
Toward me that showed her queenship in the glass
A subject's hand of hers had put in mine
The likeness of it loathed and laughable
As they that worshipped it with words and signs
Beheld her and bemocked her?

Mary Beaton. Certainly,
I think that soul drew never breath alive
To whom this letter might seem pardonable
Which timely you forbore to send her.

Mary Stuart. Nay,
I doubt not I did well to keep it back —
And did not ill to write it: for God knows
It was no small ease to my heart.

Mary Beaton. But say
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,
But kept it privily safe against a need
That I might haply sometime have of it?

Mary Stuart. What, to destroy me?

Mary Beaton. Hardly, sure, to save.

Mary Stuart. Why shouldst thou think to bring me to my death?

Mary Beaton. Indeed, no man am I that love you; nor
Need I go therefore in such fear of you
As of my mortal danger.

Mary Stuart. On my life
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,
I know not, and would choose not, though I might
So take God's office on me), one that heard

Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly mixed,
A savour as of menace, or a sound
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense
Which was not in thy meaning.
Mary Beaton. No: in mine
There lurked no treason ever; nor have you
Cause to think worse of me than loyally,
If proof may be believed on witness.
Mary Stuart. Sure,
I think I have not nor I should not have:
Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,
A present faith to serve my present need,
A foot behind my footsteps; as long since
In those French dances that we trod, and laughed
The blithe way through together. Thou couldst sing
Then, and a great while gone it is by this
Since I heard song or music; I could now
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews
Were once bid sing in their captivity
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,
One of our songs of Paris.
Mary Beaton. Give me leave
A little to cast up some wandering words
And gather back such memories as may beat
About my mind of such a song, and yet
I think I might renew some note long dumb
That once your ear allowed of. — (*Aside.*) I did pray,
Tempt me not, God: and by her mouth again
He tempts me — nay, but prompts me, being most just,
To know by trial if all remembrance be
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth

Died, and were childless in her: if she quite
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not be,
Let God forget her now at last as I
Remember: if she think but one soft thought,
Cast one poor word upon thee, God thereby
Shall surely bid me let her live: if none,
I shoot that letter home and sting her dead.
God strengthen me to sing but these words through
Though I fall dumb at end for ever. Now —

She sings.

Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.

Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux;
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.

Mary Stuart. Nay, I should once have known that song, thou say'st,
And him that sang it and should now be dead:
Was it — but his rang sweeter — was it not
Remy Belleau?

Mary Beaton. (My letter — here at heart!) *Aside.*
I think it might be — were it better writ
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast in,
And a more tunable descant.

Mary Stuart. Ay; how sweet
Sang all the world about those stars that sang

With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,
Who sang my birth and bridal! When I think
Of those French years, I only seem to see
A light of swords and singing, only hear
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,
And in between the passion of them borne
Sound of swords crossing ever, as of feet
Dancing, and life and death still equally
Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply now
My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is grown
As grave as I should be, and wears at waist
No hearts of last year's lovers any more
Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,
But rather beads for penitence; yet I doubt
Time should not more abash her heart than mine,
Who live not heartless yet. These days like those
Have power but for a season given to do
No more upon our spirits than they may,
And what they may we know not till it be
Done, and we need no more take thought of it,
As I no more of death or life to-day.

Mary Beaton. That shall you surely need not.

Mary Stuart. So I think,
Our keepers being departed: and by these,
Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,
I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,
And that by her at last I shall not die.

Scene III. — *Greenwich Palace.*

Queen Elizabeth and Davison

Elizabeth. Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade him send thee.

Davison. Madam,
But now he came upon me hard at hand
And by your gracious message bade me in.

Eliz. The day is fair as April: hast thou been
Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun
That makes these trees forget their nakedness
And all the glittering ground, as 'twere in hope,
Breathe laughingly.

Dav. Indeed, the gracious air
Had drawn me forth into the park, and thence
Comes my best speed to attend upon your grace.

Eliz. My grace is not so gracious as the sun
That graces thus the late distempered air:
And you should oftener use to walk abroad,
Sir, than your custom is: I would not have
Good servants heedless of their natural health
To do me sickly service. It were strange
That one twice bound as woman and as queen
To care for good men's lives and loyalties
Should prove herself toward either dangerous.

Dav. That
Can be no part of any servant's fear
Who lives for service of your majesty.

Eliz. I would not have it be — God else forbid —
Who have so loyal servants as I hold
All now that bide about me: for I will not

Think, though such villainy once were in men's minds,
That twice among mine English gentlemen
Shall hearts be found so foul as theirs who thought,
When I was horsed for hunting, to waylay
And shoot me through the back at unawares
With poisoned bullets: nor, thou knowest, would I,
When this was opened to me, take such care,
Ride so fenced round about with iron guard,
Or walk so warily as men counselled me
For loyal fear of what thereafter might
More prosperously be plotted: nay, God knows,
I would not hold on such poor terms my life,
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe
In dread of death or treason till the day
That they should stop my trembling breath, and ease
The piteous heart that panted like a slave's
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,
I do not think that man or woman draws
Base breath of life the loathsomest on earth
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none
Would shudderingly prolong it.

Dav. Even too well
Your servants know that greatness of your heart
Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,
And were unworthier found to serve or live
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire
To be the bulwark or the price of yours
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

Eliz. So haply should they be whose hearts beat true

With loyal blood: but whoso says they are
Is but a loving liar.
Dav. I trust your grace
Hath in your own heart no such doubt of them
As speaks in mockery through your lips.
Eliz. By God,
I say much less than righteous truth might speak
Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart
Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,
With all your souls ye swear that ye desire
The queen of Scots were happily removed,
And not a knave that loves me will put hand
To the enterprise ye look for only of me
Who only would forbear it.
Dav. If your grace
Be minded yet it shall be done at all,
The way that were most honourable and just
Were safest, sure, and best.
Eliz. I dreamt last night
Our murderess there in hold had tasted death
By execution of the sentence done
That was pronounced upon her; and the news
So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it
That had I had a sword — look to 't, and 'ware! —
I had thrust it through thy body.
Dav. God defend!
'Twas well I came not in your highness' way
While the hot mood was on you. But indeed
I would know soothly if your mind be changed
From its late root of purpose.
Eliz. No, by God:

But I were fain it could be somewise done
And leave the blame not on me. And so much,
If there were love and honesty in one
Whom I held faithful and exact of care,
Should easily be performed; but here I find
This dainty fellow so precise a knave
As will take all things dangerous on his tongue
And nothing on his hand: hot-mouthed and large
In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,
But perjurous in performance: did he not
Set hand among you to the bond whereby
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life
To do me such a service? Yet I could
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist
Of this faint falsehood in his heart: there is
That Wingfield whom thou wot'st of, would have done
With glad goodwill what I required of him,
And made no Puritan mouths on 't.

Dav. Madam, yet
Far better were it all should but be done
By line of law and judgment.

Eliz. There be men
Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

Dav. All is not wisdom that of wise men comes,
Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state
Clear as a just man's conscience.

Eliz. Proverbs! ha?
Who made thee master of these sentences,
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy?

Dav. An honest heart to serve your majesty;
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit
Than very simpleness of meaning.

Eliz. Nay,
I do believe thee; heartily I do.
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring
The warrant for her execution?
Dav. Ay,
Madam; here is it.
Eliz. I would it might not be,
Or being so just were yet not necessary.
Art thou not heartily sorry — wouldst thou not,
I say, be sad — to see me sign it?
Dav. Madam,
I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,
And specially for shipwreck of a life
To you so near allied: but seeing this doom
Wrung forth from justice by necessity,
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.
Eliz. When I shall sign, take thou this instantly
To the lord chancellor; see it straight be sealed
As quietly as he may, not saying a word,
That no man come to know it untimely: then
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury
Who are here set down to see this justice done:
I would no more be troubled with this coil
Till all be through. But, for the place of doom,
The hall there of the castle, in my mind,
Were fitter than the court or open green.
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,
And let him know what hath of us been done:
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near
To kill his heart outright.
Dav. Your majesty

Hath yet not signed the warrant.

Eliz. Ha! God's blood!
Art thou from tutor of philosophy late
Grown counsellor too and more than counsellor,
To appoint me where and what this hand of mine
Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe
And follow on thy finger? By God's death,
What if it please me now not sign at all?
This letter of my kinswoman's last writ
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues
Dictating death against her in mine ear
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now
She writes me she thanks God with all her heart
That it hath pleased him by the mean of me
To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,
Which hath been weary to her: and doth not ask
To see its length drawn longer, having had
Too much experience of its bitterness:
But only doth entreat me, since she may
Look for no favour at their zealous hands
Who are first in councils of my ministry,
That only I myself will grant her prayers;
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope
For English burial with such Catholic rites
As here were used in time of the ancient kings,
Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,
That so soon ever as her enemies
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,
Her body by her servants may be borne
To some ground consecrated, there to be

Interred: and rather, she desires, in France,
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes; so
At length may her poor body find the rest
Which living it has never known: thereto,
She prays me, from the fears she hath of those
To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,
She may not secretly be done to death,
But in her servants' sight and others', who
May witness her obedience kept and faith
To the true church, and guard her memory safe
From slanders haply to be blown abroad
Concerning her by mouths of enemies: last,
She asks that her attendants, who so well
And faithfully through all her miseries past
Have served her, may go freely where they please,
And lose not those small legacies of hers
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.
This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,
And by the name of queen she bears with her
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,
And that a word in mine own hand may thus
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner. See,
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were mine, if this
Drew no tears from me: not the meanest soul
That lives most miserable but with such words
Must needs draw down men's pity.

Dav. Sure it is,
This queen hath skill of writing: and her hand
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice

To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,
A mermaid's or a monster's, uttering best
All music or all malice. Here is come
A letter writ long since of hers to you
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or fear
She durst not or she would not thence despatch,
Sent secretly to me from Fotheringay,
Not from her hand, but with her own hand writ,
So foul of import and malignity
I durst not for your majesty's respect
With its fierce infamies afire from hell
Offend your gracious eyesight: but because
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now blind
Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon me
If what you never should have seen be shown
By hands that rather would take fire in hand
Than lay in yours this writing. *Gives her a letter.*

Eliz. By this light,
Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptuously,
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep
Aught from mine eyes that being to me designed
Might even with most offence enlighten them.
Here is her hand indeed; and she takes up *Reading.*
In gracious wise enough the charge imposed
By promise on her and desire of ours,
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully
To bring such things in question of discourse
Yet with no passion but sincerity,
As God shall witness her, declares to us
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to her
Touching ourself in terms ensuing; whereto

Answering she chid this dame for such belief
And reprehended for licentious tongue
To speak so lewdly of us: which herself
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural heart
And evil will as then to usward. Here
She writes no more than I would well believe
Of her as of the countess. Ha!
Dav. Your grace
Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart
To read these villainies through.
Eliz. God's death, man! peace:
Thou wert not best incense me toward thine own,
Whose eyes have been before me in them. What!
Was she not mad to write this? *One that had*
Your promise — lay with you times numberless —
All license and all privateness that may
Be used of wife and husband! yea, of her
And more dead men than shame remembers. *God*
Shall stand her witness — with the devil of hell
For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her
Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke!
— Nay, God shall give me patience — and his knave,
And Hatton — God have mercy! nay, but hate,
Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked her wits,
And continence of life cut off from lust,
— This common stale of Scotland that has tried
The sins of three rank nations, and consumed
Their veins whose life she took not — Italy,
France that put half this poison in her blood,
And her own kingdom that being sick therewith
Vomited out on ours the venomous thing
Whose head we set not foot on — but may God

Make my fame fouler through the world than hers
And ranker in men's record, if I spare
The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,
Wolf-woman — how the Latin rings we know,
And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose hand
Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood
Lupanar — but no brothel ever bred
Or breathed so rank a soul's infection, spawned
Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath
Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of shame
Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and send
The serpent that corruption calls her soul
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell
And make the face of darkness and the grave
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul
Sinks deeper than damnation.

Dav. Let your grace
Think only that but now the thing is known
And self-discovered which too long your love
Too dangerously hath cherished; and forget
All but that end which yet remains for her,
That right by pity be not overcome.

Eliz. God pity so my soul as I do right,
And show me no more grace alive or dead
Than I do justice here. Give me again
That warrant I put by, being foolish: yea,
Thy word spake sooth — my soul's eyes were put out —
I could not see for pity. Thou didst well —
I am bounden to thee heartily — to cure
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who thought

Never to take this thing upon it, nor
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence:
And let me see no word nor hear of her
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

Act V

MARY STUART

Scene I. — *Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*

Mary Stuart and Mary Beaton.

Mary Stuart (*sings*).

O Lord my God,
I have trusted in thee;
O Jesu my dearest one,
Now set me free.
In prison's oppression,
In sorrow's obsession,
I weary for thee.
With sighing and crying
Bow down as dying
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!

Free are the dead: yet fain I would have had
Once, before all captivity find end,
Some breath of freedom living. These that come,
I think, with no such message, must not find,
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart
As maimed in me with sickness. Three years gone
When last I parted from the earl marshal's charge,
I did not think to see his face again
Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his wife
Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,

If I seem ready, as meseems I should,
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,
Bid them come in. *Exit Mary Beaton.*
I cannot tell at last
If it be fear or hope that should expect
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear
Was none of my familiars while I lived
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose
Than death or life may now divide me from.
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun
With eyes that may not lead us where we will,
And halt behind the footless flight of hope
With feet that may not follow: nor were aught
So much, of all things life may think to have,
That one not cowardly born should find it worth
The purchase of so base a price as this,
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not think
This is mine end that comes upon me: but
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,
That ever I should fear it.

Enter Kent, Shrewsbury, Beale, and Sheriff.

Sirs, good day:
With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid
You and your message welcome.

Kent. Madam, this
The secretary of the council here hath charge
To read as their commission.

Mary Stuart. Let me hear
In as brief wise as may beseem the time
The purport of it.

Beale. Our commission here
Given by the council under the great seal
Pronounces on your head for present doom
Death, by this written sentence.
Mary Stuart. Ay, my lords?
May I believe this, and not hold myself
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's name,
Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me know
If this be dream or waking.
Kent. Verily,
No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself
To stand before God's judgment presently.
Mary Stuart. I had rather so than ever stand again
Before the face of man's. Why speak not you,
To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal? Nay,
Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands
As one at point to weep. Why, good my lord,
To know that none may swear by Mary's life
And hope again to find belief of man
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say
The word you have for her that never was
Less than your friend, and prisoner.
Shrewsbury. None save this,
Which willingly I would not speak, I may;
That presently your time is come to die.
Mary Stuart. Why, then, I am well content to leave a world
Wherein I am no more serviceable at all
To God or man, and have therein so long
Endured so much affliction. All my life
I have ever earnestly desired the love

And friendship of your queen; have warned her oft
Of coming dangers; and have cherished long
The wish that I but once might speak with her
In plain-souled confidence; being well assured,
Had we but once met, there an end had been
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,
With equal wrong toward either, treacherously
Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been
Imprisoned, and inveterately maligned,
And here must now be murdered. But I know
That only for my faith's sake I must die,
And this to know for truth is recompense
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy book
I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,
I am wholly ignorant of it; and solemnly
Declare that never yet conspiracy
Devised against the queen my sister's life
Took instigation or assent from me.

Kent. You swear but on a popish Testament:
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

Mary Stuart. I swear upon the book wherein I trust:
Would you give rather credit to mine oath
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in?

Kent. Madam, I fain would have you heartily
Renounce your superstition; toward which end
With us the godly dean of Peterborough,
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for faith
Of God and of the queen, is hither come
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

Mary Stuart. If you, my lords, or he will pray for me,
I shall be thankful for your prayers; but may not
With theirs that hold another faith mix mine.
I pray you therefore that mine almoner may
Have leave to attend on me, that from his hands
I, having made confession, may receive
The sacrament.
Kent. We may not grant you this.
Mary Stuart. I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?
But two months gone this grace was granted me
By word expressly from your queen, to have
Again his ministration: and at last
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death
Is this denied me?
Kent. Madam, for your soul
More meet it were to cast these mummeries out
And bear Christ only in your heart, than serve
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue
His mere idolatrous likeness.
Mary Stuart. This were strange
That I should bear him visible in my hand
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,
Put me, I pray, to no more argument:
But if this least thing be not granted, yet
Grant me to know the season of my death.
Shrews. At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.
Mary Stuart. So shall I hardly see the sun again.
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men condemned
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly:
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who make
Such brief end of the bitterness of death

For me who have borne such bitter length of life,
Than plead with protestation of appeal
For half a piteous hour's remission: nor
Henceforward shall I be denied of man
Aught, who may never now crave aught again
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this
Not easily be believed of men, nor find
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my friend,
Bid my physician Gorion come to me:
I have to speak with him — sirs, with your leave —
Of certain monies due to me in France.
What, shall I twice desire your leave, my lords,
To live these poor last hours of mine alive
At peace among my friends? I have much to do,
And little time wherein to do it is left.

Shrews. (*to Kent apart*). I pray she may not mean worse than I would
Against herself ere morning.

Kent. Let not then
This French knave's drugs come near her, nor himself:
We will take order for it.

Shrews. Nay, this were but
To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and make
Despair more desperate than itself. Pray God
She be not minded to compel us put
Force at the last upon her of men's hands
To hale her violently to death, and make
Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's face
With stain of strife and passion.

Exeunt all but Mary Stuart and Mary Beaton.

Mary Stuart. So, my friend

The last of all our Maries are you left
To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and now
Strange looks my death upon me: yet, albeit
Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to choose
Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,
To make death welcome in what wise we will.
Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,
Watch through the night and pray for me: perchance,
When ere the sundawn they shall bring me forth,
I may behold him, and upon my knees
Receive his blessing. Let our supper be
Served earlier in than wont was: whereunto
I bid my true poor servants here, to take
Farewell and drink at parting to them all
The cup of my last kindness, in good hope
They shall stand alway constant in their faith
And dwell in peace together: thereupon
What little store is left me will I share
Among them, and between my girls divide
My wardrobe and my jewels severally,
Reserving but the black robe and the red
That shall attire me for my death: and last
With mine own hand shall be my will writ out
And all memorials more set down therein
That I would leave for legacies of love
To my next kinsmen and my household folk.
And to the king my brother yet of France
Must I write briefly, but a word to say
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this crown,
And our true faith's sake, but am barred from sight
Even of mine almoner here, though hard at hand;

And I would bid him take upon his charge
The keeping of my servants, as I think
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse
Albeit his life be softer than his heart;
And in religion for a queen's soul pray
That once was styled Most Christian, and is now
In the true faith about to die, deprived
Of all her past possessions. But this most
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain
By Gorion's word of mouth receive my heart,
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the leech
Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

Exit Mary Beaton.

She is dumb as death: yet never in her life
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the rest,
Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well
I think I know: and one of them or twain
At least may surely see me to my death
Ere twice the hours have changed again. Perchance
Love that can weep not would the gladlier die
For those it cannot weep on. Time wears thin:
They should not now play laggard: nay, he comes,
The last that ever speaks alone with me
Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

Enter Gorion.

I have sent once more for you to no such end
As sick men for physicians: no strong drug
May put the death next morning twelve hours back
Whose twilight overshadows me, that am
Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know
If I may lay the last of all my trust

On you that ever shall be laid on man
To prove him kind and loyal.
Gorion. So may God
Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you
Faithful, though none but I were in the world
That you might trust beside.
Mary Stuart. With equal heart
Do I believe and thank you. I would send
To Paris for the ambassador from Spain
This letter with two diamonds, which your craft
For me must cover from men's thievish eyes
Where they may be not looked for.
Gor. Easily
Within some molten drug may these be hid,
And faithfully by me conveyed to him.
Mary Stuart. The lesser of them shall he keep in sign
Of my good friendship toward himself: but this
In token to King Philip shall he give
That for the truth I die, and dying commend
To him my friends and servants, Gilbert Curle,
His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall
To-night watch by me; and my ladies all
That have endured my prison: let him not
Forget from his good favour one of these
That I remember to him: Charles Arundel,
And either banished Paget; one whose heart
Was better toward my service than his hand,
Morgan: and of mine exiles for their faith,
The prelates first of Glasgow and of Ross;
And Liggons and Throgmorton, that have lost
For me their leave to live on English earth;
And Westmoreland, that lives now more forlorn

Than died that earl who rose for me with him.
These I beseech him favour for my sake
Still: and forget not, if he come again
To rule as king in England, one of them
That were mine enemies here: the treasurer first,
And Leicester, Walsingham, and Huntingdon,
At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen years gone,
And Wade that spied upon me three years since,
And Paulet here my gaoler: set them down
For him to wreak wrath's utmost justice on,
In my revenge remembered. Though I be
Dead, let him not forsake his hope to reign
Upon this people: with my last breath left
I make this last prayer to him, that not the less
He will maintain the invasion yet designed
Of us before on England: let him think,
It is God's quarrel, and on earth a cause
Well worthy of his greatness: which being won,
Let him forget no man of these nor me.
And now will I lie down, that four hours' sleep
May give me strength before I sleep again
And need take never thought for waking more.

Scene II. — *The Presence Chamber.*

Shrewsbury, Kent, Paulet, Drury, Melville, and Attendants.

Kent. The stroke is past of eight.
Shrewsbury. Not far, my lord.
Kent. What stays the provost and the sheriff yet
That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth?
What, are her doors locked inwards? then perchance

Our last night's auguries of some close design
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous hand
To baffle death by justice hit but right
The heart of her bad purpose.
Shrews. Fear it not:
See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

Enter Mary Stuart, led by two gentlemen and preceded by the Sheriff; Mary Beaton, Barbara Mowbray, and other ladies behind, who remain in the doorway.

Melville (kneeling to Mary). Woe am I,
Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.
Mary Stuart. Weep not, good Melville: rather should your heart
Rejoice that here an end is come at last
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows; for be sure
That all this world is only vanity.
And this record I pray you make of me,
That a true woman to my faith I die,
And true to Scotland and to France: but God
Forgive them that have long desired mine end
And with false tongues have thirsted for my blood
As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.
O God, who art truth, and the author of all truth,
Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my heart,
And how that I was willing all my days
That England should with Scotland be fast friends.
Commend me to my son: tell him that I
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights
As king: and now, good Melville, fare thee well.

My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your charge
Hath bidden back my women there at door
Who fain to the end would bear me company?
Kent. Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,
That these should so have leave to vex men's ears
With cries and loose lamentings: haply too
They might in superstition seek to dip
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.
Mary Stuart. That will I pledge my word they shall not. Nay,
The queen would surely not deny me this,
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.
Even a far meaner person dying I think
She would not have so handled. Sir, you know
I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls
Desire no more than but to see me die.
Shrews. Madam, you have leave to elect of this your train
Two ladies with four men to go with you.
Mary Stuart. I choose from forth my Scottish following here
Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle: of men,
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.
Exeunt: manent Mary Beaton and Barbara Mowbray.
Barbara. I wist I was not worthy, though my child
It is that her own hands made Christian: but
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.
Alas, and would not all we die with her?
Mary Beaton. Why, from the gallery here at hand your eyes
May go with her along the hall beneath
Even to the scaffold: and I fain would hear

What fain I would not look on. Pray you, then,
If you may bear to see it as those below,
Do me that sad good service of your eyes
For mine to look upon it, and declare
All that till all be done I will not see;
I pray you of your pity.

Barb. Though mine heart
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight
That may be faithful yet in following her,
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being fain
To give your love such bitter comfort, who
So long have never left her.

Mary Beaton. Till she die —
I have ever known I shall not till she die.
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,
My heart can better bear these pulses, else
Unbearable, that rend it.

Barb. Yea, I see
Stand in mid hall the scaffold, black as death,
And black the block upon it: all around,
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers;
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined
And two men masked on either hand beyond:
And hard behind the block a cushion set,
Black, as the chair behind it.

Mary Beaton. When I saw
Fallen on the scaffold once a young man's head,
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on:
I knew not that I spake: and toward your ears
Indeed I spake not.

Barb. All those faces change;
She comes more royally than ever yet

Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,
Imperial more than empire made her, born
Enthroned as queen sat never. Not a line
Stirs of her sovereign feature: like a bride
Brought home she mounts the scaffold; and her eyes
Sweep regal round the cirque beneath, and rest,
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and they,
The doomsmen earls, beside her; at her left
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on high,
To read the warrant.

Mary Beaton. None stands there but knows
What things therein are writ against her: God
Knows what therein is writ not. God forgive
All.

Barb. Not a face there breathes of all the throng
But is more moved than hers to hear this read,
Whose look alone is changed not.

Mary Beaton. Once I knew
A face that changed not in as dire an hour
More than the queen's face changes. Hath he not
Ended?

Barb. You cannot hear them speak below:
Come near and hearken; bid not me repeat
All.

Mary Beaton. I beseech you — for I may not come.

Barb. Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a word or twain,
And brieflier yet she answers, and stands up
As though to kneel, and pray.

Mary Beaton. I too have prayed —
God hear at last her prayers not less than mine,
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

Barb. Now draws nigh

That heretic priest, and bows himself, and thrice
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to speak,
Stammering: she waves him by, as one whose prayers
She knows may nought avail her: now she kneels,
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved
She strikes against her bosom, hear her! Now
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,
Praying: and a voice all round goes up with his:
But hers is lift up higher than climbs their cry,
In the great psalms of penitence; and now
She prays aloud in English; for the Pope
Our father, and his church; and for her son,
And for the queen her murderess; and that God
May turn from England yet his wrath away;
And so forgives her enemies; and implores
High intercession of the saints with Christ,
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,
And crossing now her breast — Ah, heard you not?
Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,
So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,
Receive me to thy mercy so, and so
Forgive my sins.

Mary Beaton. So be it, if so God please.
Is she not risen up yet?

Barb. Yea, but mine eyes
Darken: because those deadly twain close masked
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness, which
Gently she grants: *for now*, she said, *I hope,*
You shall end all my troubles. Now meseems
They would put hand upon her as to help,
And disarray her raiment: but she smiles —

Heard you not that? can you not hear nor speak,
Poor heart, for pain? *Truly*, she said, *my lords,*
I never had such chamber-grooms before
As these to wait on me.
Mary Beaton. An end, an end.
Barb. Now come those twain upon the scaffold up
Whom she preferred before us: and she lays
Her crucifix down, which now the headsman takes
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.
And now they lift her veil up from her head
Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,
And all in red as of a funeral flame
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall
And clothed as if with sunset: and she takes
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and draws
Their covering on her arms: and now those twain
Burst out aloud in weeping: and she speaks —
Weep not; I promised for you. Now she kneels;
And Jane binds round a kerchief on her eyes:
And smiling last her heavenliest smile on earth,
She waves a blind hand toward them, with *Farewell,*
Farewell, to meet again: and they come down
And leave her praying aloud, *In thee, O Lord,*
I put my trust: and now, that psalm being through,
She lays between the block and her soft neck
Her long white peerless hands up tenderly,
Which now the headsman draws again away,
But softly too: now stir her lips again —
Into thine hands, O Lord, into thine hands,
Lord, I commend my spirit: and now — but now,
Look you, not I, the last upon her.

Mary Beaton. Ha!
He strikes awry: she stirs not. Nay, but now
He strikes aright, and ends it.
Barb. Hark, a cry.
Voice below. So perish all found enemies of the queen!
Another Voice. Amen.
Mary Beaton. I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God, who answers here.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF SWINBURNE'S WRITINGS

1860. The Queen Mother, and Rosamond.
1865. Atalanta in Calydon.
1865. Chastelard: A Tragedy.
1866. Poems and Ballads.
1866. Note on Poems and Reviews.
1867. A Song of Italy.
1868. Siena.
1868. William Blake: A Critical Essay.
1870. Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic; September 4th, 1870.
1871. Songs before Sunrise.
1872. Under the Microscope.
1874. Bothwell: A Tragedy.
1875. George Chapman.
1875. Essays and Studies.
1875. Songs of Two Nations (A Song of Italy, Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic, and Diræ).
1876. Erechtheus: A Tragedy.
1877. A Note on Charlotte Brontë.
1878. Poems and Ballads. Second Series.
1880. A Study of Shakespeare.
1880. Songs of the Springtides.
1880. Studies in Song.
1880. Specimens of Modern Poets. The Heptalogia; or, the Seven against Sense. A Cap with Seven Bells.
1881. Mary Stuart: A Tragedy.
1882. Tristram of Lyonesse, and Other Poems.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WRITINGS

1883. A Century of Roundels.
1884. A Midsummer Holiday, and Other Poems.
1885. Marino Faliero: A Tragedy.
1886. A Study of Victor Hugo.
1886. Miscellanies.
1887. Locrine: A Tragedy.
1889. A Study of Ben Jonson.
1889. Poems and Ballads. Third Series.
1892. The Sisters: A Tragedy.
1894. Astrophel, and Other Poems.
1894. Studies in Prose and Poetry.
1896. The Tale of Balen.
1899. Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards.
1904. A Channel Passage, and Other Poems.
1905. Love's Cross Currents.
1908. The Duke of Gandia.
1908. The Age of Shakespeare.

The Poetical Works of Swinburne have been published in complete form in six volumes, 1904 (London, Chatto and Windus; New York, Harper and Brothers), and the Tragedies in five volumes, 1905 (London, Chatto and Windus; New York, Harper and Brothers). *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus* are included in the Poems.

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Three prose productions of Swinburne himself are important for an understanding of his methods and aims:—

Notes on Poems and Reviews, 1866.
Under the Microscope, 1872.
Dedicatory Epistle to the Collected Poems, 1904.

NOTES

ATALANTA IN CALYDON

THE general plan of Swinburne's play is apparently the same as that of the *Meleager* of Euripides, only a few fragments of which have been preserved.

Page 1. **Τοὺς ζῶντας**, etc.

Translated by Professor Gilbert Murray: —

> Let thy good deeds be done
> To them that live. Death maketh every one
> The same, Earth and Shadow. In that stress
> The Nothing reeleth back to Nothingness.

Page 4. The Greek Dedicatory Poem is addressed to Walter Savage Landor. The first part was addressed to him while he was still living. The second part was added after his death. See the preceding English Dedication. The following is a translation: —

Thou art gone far away from the North, but the Nymphs of sweet breath led thee over a prosperous sea. For they filled thy mouth with honey from the gods, that, hearing thy melodious voice, Poseidon might not injure thee. Such a minstrel wert thou born. We still lament and lack thee gone, and ever we desire thee. One Muse unto another turned and said: Lo, he has come, the best beloved of mortals; his ancient hands have plucked fresh-budded wreaths, his hoary head is hid beneath the laurel, he has come to chant to Sicilian pipes and to Sicilian lyres. For he has sung to many a lyre, and often has Apollo found him seated in the glens and crowned him with flowers, and granted him to speak of pleasant things: of Pan, ever-to-be-remembered, of Pitus, of ill-fated Corythos, of the divine Hamadryad whom a mortal loved. He put to sleep Cymodameia in the deep sea, the child of Agamemnon he gave to her sire, he sent to sacred Delphi god-smitten Orestes hither and thither driven by the hateful goddesses.

Thou art gone far away from thy friends and from song, to pluck the flowers of gentle Persephone. Thou art gone. No more shalt thou be, nor shall I ever sit by thee in awe, and touch thy hands with reverent hands. Now once more a bitter-sweet reverence steals over me as I recall what such an one as I have gained from thee. No more, sire, shall I gladden my dear eyes by thine, nor, best beloved, grasp thy right hand. Dust crumbles, and life crumbles too: which of these fleeting things is less? Not dust, but life. To me sweeter by far art thou than those who still do live. To thee in death these words I bear; paltry, but from my heart in truth. Turn not away, but take them, casting a kindly glance. Something great I would it were, but nothing worthy have I for thee; I who missed thy funeral rites. It is not in my power: not even to offer mead. Would that I could have touched thee with my hands and beheld thee once again and ministered to thy dear head with tears and libations, to thy revered eyes and sacred body. O that I had! for these would greatly ease my mind. Now, far away from thy grave, I bear my mourning. I do not sing my strain above thy tomb: kept away afar, I have all-tearful feelings. Hail to thee in death; know that thou hast honour before men and gods, if god there be over those beneath the earth. Hail, sire; hail, beloved father, the best by far of the singers whom we know; yea, best of those that shall sing. Hail, and mayst thou have wealth as have the dead: rest free from enmity and friendship. Though absent be thy tomb, in later times memorials thou shalt have: memorials gone, a cherished memory still shall be to thee: thee whom the godlike Graces mourn and Aphrodite bewails, who ever delights in the garlands of beautiful dances. Never once has old age worn out sacred minstrels. This memorial here makes manifest thy meed of glory. Thou wert a mortal beloved of the Immortals; and to thee, if to any, the Nymphs gave gifts much desired, and their last. A bronze sleep has now come upon them, and a calm season; and in a common grave they have a common fate. Thou too sleepest the fair sleep of fame in the hollow earth, far from thy native land. Far away by the Etruscan swell of the yellow stream thou sleepest, and still thy dear mother Earth yearns for thee; but thou art gone. Erstwhile a lover of thy city, yet thou hast renounced it. Sleep on: blest, not wretched, shalt thou be. Brief time and fate rule mortal men; now mirth, now grief lays hold of them; often light injures them; darkness hides them in their weeping; and sleep stings those awake. Never shall

darkness nor any light of the sun be received when in the tomb the eyes of the dead have fallen asleep. No dream by night nor vision in sleep shall be to those in delight or in mourning. But all occupy one abode and chair; immortal instead of mortal, beautiful instead of base.

Page 10. ἴστω, etc.

Professor Lewis Campbell translates these lines thus: —

> She burnt to its last ash the blackened brand,
> That tallied with his life, so fate had planned,
> From his first cry, long as his days should run.
> Be witness else, whoso is not unwise,
> What Clotho taught Althæa to devise,
> Through fire to slay her son!

The play is constructed on the Greek model; and, instead of being divided into acts and scenes, falls into divisions which are marked by the choruses. Its structure is as follows: —

Prologue, ll. 1–64.
Parodos, or First Chorus, ll. 65–200.
First Episode, ll. 201–313.
First Stasimon, or Second Chorus, ll. 314–361.]
Second Episode, ll. 362–718.
Second Stasimon, ll. 719–866.
Third Episode, ll. 867–1037.
Third Stasimon, ll. 1038 –1204.
Fourth Episode, ll. 1205–1373.
Fourth Stasimon, ll. 1374–1468.
Fifth Episode, ll. 1469–1808.
Fifth Stasimon, ll. 1809–1855.
Exodus, or Exodos, ll. 1856–2317.

The Prologue, **Lines 1–64**. It states the ruin which is impending and the sacrifice which will avert it.

The time is morning, and the scene is laid in the Calydonian hills. The prologue is very much like that of Æschylus, *Agamemnon*.

Line 1. *Maiden.* Artemis, the virgin goddess of the moon.

Lines 4–9. *Being treble*, etc. Artemis was goddess of the moon, of the woods and mountains, and of the chase.

Line 16. *Between the hands*, etc. A Homeric commonplace.

Line 17. *O fair-faced sun.* The sun-god, Apollo, is here addressed.

Line 28. *foam.* A verb. The grammatical construction is: Let the long sea laugh . . . and foam . . . and all the winds laugh, etc.

Lines 30–32. *Whose hair . . . snow.* The construction is: Whose hair, with tresses . . . gold, divides . . . wave, or whose breast, shuddering . . . snow, divides . . . wave.

Line 35. *Each horn of Acheloüs.* When the river overflows its banks, it is said to put forth horns. See note to l. 899.

Line 36. *Euenus.* Another form is Evenus. A river, not far from the Acheloüs, in Ætolia. *Straitening*, because the river empties where the Ionian Sea narrows to the Corinthian Strait.

Line 47. *Ladon.* A river in Arcadia. *Mænalus.* A mountain in Arcadia.

Line 51. *Ætolian.* The city of Calydon is in the province of Ætolia.

Line 52. *Lelantian pasturage.* The Lelantian field at the mouth of the river Evenus, in Ætolia.

Lines 53–57. *Son of Zeus . . . sun.* The god of the river Acheloüs changed himself into a bull to contend with Heracles for Dejanira of Calydon. He was defeated, losing one of his horns. The river rises in Mount Pindus and flows south to the Ionian Sea. It is the largest river in Greece. The story of the contest is told in Sophocles, *Trachiniæ*, ll. 497–530.

Line 58. *These virgins.* This refers to the Ætolian virgins who make up the chorus of the play.

The Parodos, or *First Chorus.* **Lines 65–200.** *Choral Song*, ll. 65–120. This triumphant example of verbal melody is supposed to be sung by a chorus of Ætolian maidens.

"Swinburne first took the world with melody. The opening chorus of *Atalanta in Calydon* was, in the ears of men, a new singing voice on earth. Its music stamps the memory of whoever hears it beyond any possible oblivion." — WOODBERRY.

Line 66. *The mother of months.* Artemis, the goddess of the moon. See note to l. 1. Compare Shelley, *Revolt of Islam*, Canto IV, Stanza 1, "the mother of the months"; and *Prometheus Bound*, Act IV.

Line 70. *Itylus.* Procne was given in marriage to the Thracian (l. 71) prince, Tereus, and became the mother of Itylus. Tereus grew weary of her, plucked out her tongue to ensure her silence (l. 72), and married her sister Philomela. By embroidering her story on a robe, Procne con-

trived to tell Philomela the truth, and in revenge they slew Itylus. The gods changed Procne into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale. Ever since, the nightingale has bewailed the death of Itylus.

This is but one of the many forms of this myth, and seems to be the one adopted by Swinburne. See Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, ll. 140 ff.

Line 74. *Maiden most perfect*, etc. Artemis.

Line 92. *The light that loses the night that wins.* That is, the winter days, when daylight is diminishing and darkness is increasing.

Line 108. *Mænad.* A frenzied female worshipper of Bacchus. *Bassarid.* Bacchanals of Lydia and Thrace.

Lines 111–112. *And screen . . . hid.* Note the chiastic construction: Screen the maiden and leave in sight the god.

Lines 121–200. The second part of the Parodos, constructed on the principle of the Kommos; that is, a dialogue between the chorus and a character or characters in the drama.

Line 186. *Southward across Euenus.* That is, from Arcadia.

Lines 209 ff. *Love is one thing*, etc. Compare Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 792 ff., translated by Jebb: The just themselves have their minds warped by thee [Love] to wrong, for their ruin: 'tis thou that hast stirred up this present strife of kinsmen.

Lines 201–313. *The First Episode.*

Lines 261–271. *this man grown so great . . . drinking death.* Compare Æschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*, ll. 380–395, which is descriptive of Tydeus, the brother of Meleager.

The First Stasimon, or *Second Chorus.* **Lines 314–361.** The subject is the Making of Man, and the chorus foreshadows the theme of the play — the vanity of life and the helplessness of man before the twin evils, Fate and the Gods.

The Second Episode. **Lines 362–718.** The Gathering of the Clans, and the introduction of the persons of the drama, especially Atalanta.

Lines 381–452. For this conversation between Althæa and Meleager, compare that between Helen and Priam in the *Iliad*, Book III, ll. 161–244, and Euripides' fragment *Meleager*, 531.

Lines 391–392. *Peleus . . . sea-bred wife . . . son.* Peleus, of the city of Larissa, was a King of Thessaly. He was wedded to Thetis, the sea-nymph, and their son was Achilles. Before his marriage with Thetis he had married Antigone, the daughter of Eurytion. He accidentally slew Eurytion in the Calydonian hunt. See note to l. 1248.

Line 399. *O twin-born blood of Leda.* Castor and Pollux, the twins of Clytæmnestra and Helen, respectively. Leda was the sister of Althæa. See Swinburne's *Ode to Athens*, l. 170 and my note.

Lines 410–411. *Eurotas . . . Sparta.* Sparta was situated on the river Eurotas, the chief river in Laconia.

Line 429. *Telamon.* The brother of Peleus, who plotted with Peleus against his brother Phocus and slew him. For this he was banished, and he afterwards became King of Salamis.

Line 431. *twice-washed Salamis.* By the tides. Salamis is also called "sea-born."

Line 443. *the left unsandalled foot.* It was an Ætolian custom to go to war with one foot unshod. See Euripides, *Meleager*, Fragment No. 531. (Wagner's Edition.)

Lines 445–446. *Toxeus . . . Plexippus.* See the author's Argument prefixed to the play.

Lines 453–465. A good example of stichomythia, or dialogue in single lines. For other examples, see ll. 1491–1509 and 1874–1890, and *Erechtheus*, ll. 295–300, 403–420, 1086–1111.

Line 459. *Yet is not less*, etc. Compare Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 450–457.

Lines 477–486. *A woman armed*, etc. The fragments of the lost play by Euripides on the story of the Calydonian hunt contain similar sentiments. Fragments No. 527 and 528. (Wagner's Edition.) Compare, too, Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 364–373, and 639–680; and Æschylus, *Eumenides*, ll. 490–565.

Lines 505–525. *But when white age*, etc. Compare this description of the Fortunate or Happy Isles of the West with Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, 563 ff.; Pindar, Olympian Odes, II, 78 ff.; and his *Dirges*, Fragment I.

Line 590. *hewn pine.* Compare Horace, *Odes*, I, 14, l. 11, "Pontica pinus."

Line 599. *the irremeable Symplegades*, or Clashing Islands at the mouth of the Euxine Sea. Compare l. 2141.

Line 601. *Colchis.* A country in Asia to the east of the Euxine Sea and south of the Caucasus Mountains.

The Second Stasimon. **Lines 719–866.** The Coming of Love, the "evil blossom," the "Mother of Strife," as she proved to be in this tragedy.

The wonderful melody of the opening lines is taken up at the end of the Sixth Stasimon.

In Swinburne's own volume of Selections, this chorus is named Anadyomene, one of the many epithets of Aphrodite, and meaning *rising from the foam*. Aphrodite Anadyomene was the subject of a famous painting by Apelles.

Line 854. *Tyro.* By Poseidon, who assumed the form of the River-god Enipeus, she became the mother of Pelias and Neleus.

Lines 860–862. *She endured not longer to wear On her bosom a saffron vest, On her shoulder an ashwood quiver.* A saffron-colored garment and a quiver were Greek emblems of virginity.

The Third Episode. **Lines 867–1037.** The foreshadowing of the tragedy: the quarrel between Meleager and his uncles Toxeus and Plexippus — the Poison of Speech.

Line 899. *Elis.* A district of the Peloponnesus, west of Arcadia. *Acheloïan horn.* See note to line 35.

Line 902. *Iasius.* Or Jasus, the father of Atalanta. See the Author's Argument.

Lines 951 ff. *Men and the chosen of all this people,* etc. For the sentiments of Atalanta, compare Euripides, *Meleager* (a fragment), 529, thus translated by Murray: —

> And should I come to wedlock — which I pray
> God send me not! — how should I be as they
> Who live dim days in chambers closed apart?
> My children shall be higher in their heart!
> Surely long days of hardihood and toil
> Well wrought, in man or woman are the soil
> The best fruits spring from.

Lines 955–962. *Thou . . . Tantalus.* Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, had seven daughters, and boasted of her superiority to Leto, who had but one daughter, Artemis. For this reason Artemis slew the seven. The daughters were "holy born," because Tantalus was descended from Zeus.

Line 1031. *Tegea.* An important city in Arcadia.

The Third Stasimon. **Lines 1038–1204.** The Supreme Evil, God. In this chorus is plainly seen the very un-Greek attitude of defiance of the supreme powers. The sentiment regarding the evil of speech, however, is a characteristically Greek idea. See, for example, Æschylus,

Prometheus Bound, and the closing speech of the chorus in Sophocles, *Antigone*.

Line 1077. *weeping Seven.* The Hyades, a group of seven stars in the head of the constellation Taurus, which threatened rain when they rose with the sun. Compare Tennyson's "Rainy Hyades," *Ulysses*, l. 10. Virgil speaks of "pluvias Hyades," *Æneid*, I, 744; and III, 516.

The Fourth Episode. **Lines 1205–1373.** The Herald's account to Althæa of the slaying of the Calydonian boar.

Line 1233. *Acarnania.* A district in Western Greece.

Line 1235. *Laertes.* The father of Odysseus.

Line 1236. *Nestor.* A favorite hero of Homer, famous for wisdom, justice, eloquence, experience in war, energy, and courage. As a ruler of Messenia he had lived among the Gerenians.

Line 1246. *Iphicles.* A half-brother of Heracles.

Line 1247. *Him . . . bull.* Theseus, who slew the Minotaur.

Line 1248. *Pirithous.* King of the Lapithæ. The friendship between Pirithous and Theseus was famous.

Line 1248. *Eurytion.* The father-in-law of Peleus. See note to lines 391–392.

Line 1249. *Bride-bound . . . Æacides.* Peleus, who was wedded to the sea-nymph Thetis. Their son was Achilles.

Line 1250. *Telamon.* See note to line 429.

Line 1252. *Amphiaraus.* Famous as a prophet.

Line 1253. *Thy mother's . . . sons.* Toxeus and Plexippus; and Castor and Pollux.

Line 1255. *Jason.* The leader of the Argonaut expedition in search of the Golden Fleece. He had just returned to Greece.

Line 1255. *Dryas.* Called "a shepherd of the people," in the *Iliad*, Book I, 263.

Lines 1257–1258. *Idas . . . Lynceus.* Two brothers who were friends and cousins of Castor and Pollux. Lynceus had sight so keen that he could see through a tree or into the middle of the earth.

Line 1258. *Admetus twice espoused.* He was wedded to Theone, and, after her death, to Alcestis, who is so famous for her conjugal devotion in dying for her husband.

Line 1259. *Hippasus and Hyleus.* Hippasus is mentioned as a centaur in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8, 313; and in the same passage Hyleus is said to have been at the Calydonian hunt, *Metamorphoses*, 8, 312.

The Fourth Stasimon. **Lines 1374–1468.** A hymn of thanksgiving, and a prayer to Artemis to be favorable.

Lines 1374 ff. With these lines compare Euripides, *The Bacchæ*, ll. 402–431, and Sophocles, *Œdipus at Colonos*, ll. 668–693.

Line 1424. *Iamus.* The son of Apollo and the nymph Evadne. He was deserted by his mother for a time, and was fed on honey by two snakes. A bed of violets covered him. Apollo led him to Olympus and gave him prophetic powers.

Line 1465. *Orion.* A celebrated giant, whose death is variously related; but all the legends agree in assigning it to the goddess Artemis.

The Fifth Episode. **Lines 1469–1808.** The Messenger announces to Althæa the death of her brothers by the hand of her son Meleager; and the picturing of the conflict between her sisterly and her motherly love.

Lines 1560–1699. *But no part here . . . with all men's tears.* Althæa's preference of her brothers to her own son has a very interesting parallel in ll. 905–920 in Sophocles, *Antigone*, where Antigone apparently refers to a similar choice by the wife of Intaphernes. (Herodotus, III, 119.) The parallel is interesting, because Swinburne has enlarged on an idea which is at variance with ours, and which has caused this passage in the *Antigone* to be regarded as spurious, though on no textual grounds whatever.

Line 1740. *Eurythemis.* See Swinburne's *Argument.*

The Fifth Stasimon. **Lines 1809–1855.** A magnificent chorus on Fate. Compare Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 944–987.

The Exodus, or Exodos. **Lines 1856–2317.**

Lines 1948–2181. A splendid example of the Greek Kommos, in which the chorus, semi-chorus, second messenger, Meleager, Atalanta, and Œneus, combine in a magnificent lament for the fate of Meleager. This part is considered by Swinburne to be the best thing in the play.

Line 2121. *Acroceraunian snow.* The Ceraunian mountains in Epirus. *ford of the fleece of gold.* The Hellespont.

Line 2125. *Chersonese.* The land to the north of the Hellespont.

Line 2126. *Pontic seas.* The Black Sea.

Line 2141. *Propontis.* The Sea of Marmora.

Line 2151. *Helle.* The Hellespont.

Line 2155. *pine.* See note to l. 590.

Lines 2191–2195. *for the best man dead*, etc. A characteristically Greek conception of death. See, for example, the speech of Achilles in

the underworld, *Odyssey*, Book XI, ll. 488–491. Compare, too, Euripides, *Meleager*, Fragment No. 539. (Wagner's Edition.) It is translated by Murray: —

> Even so
> 'Tis well in the sunshine. And to lie below,
> With dead things, in the dark, will that be well? —
> I know the dreams of it are horrible . . .
> I am old now; but, oh, with last breath
> I spit it from me! I will not pray for death.

Lines 2243–2245. *Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch*, etc. The famous Greek principle, "Nothing in excess."

Lines 2295–2297. *I am gone down*, etc. Compare note to ll. 2191–2195.

Line 2312. *his lords.* The gods.

ERECHTHEUS

The structure of *Erechtheus* is as follows: —

Prologue, ll. 1–94.
Parodos, ll. 95–238.
First Episode, ll. 239–348.
First Stasimon, ll. 349–360.
Second Episode, ll. 361–554.
Second Stasimon, ll. 555–640.
Third Episode, ll. 641–753.
Third Stasimon, ll. 754–889.
Fourth Episode, ll. 890–1074.
Fourth Stasimon, ll. 1075–1190.
Fifth Episode, ll. 1191–1240.
Fifth Stasimon, ll. 1241–1252.
Sixth Episode, ll. 1253–1282.
Sixth Stasimon, ll. 1283–1483.
Seventh Episode, ll. 1484–1623.
Seventh Stasimon, ll. 1624–1643.
Exodus, ll. 1644–1760.

Page 95. The translation of the Greek quotations is as follows: O brilliant, violet-crowned, and famed in song, pillar of Hellas, renowned Athens, city heaven-sent. — Pindar, Fragment 47.

ATOSSA. Say, what shepherd sways their numbers? Who their army's king and lord?

CHORUS. They call no man lord and master, buckle under no man's sword.
— Æschylus, *Persians*, ll. 241–242 (Campbell's Translation).

Compare the *Ode to Athens*, l. 37, and my note.

The Prologue, **Lines 1–94**. A prayer of Erechtheus to his Goddess-Mother Earth that Athens, threatened by the Eleusinians under Eumolpus may be saved.

Lines 1–4. *Mother*. Earth, the mother of Erechtheus.

Line 7. *That strong cunning God*. Hephæstus.

Line 10. *fosterling of Pallas*. He was reared by Athena.

Line 12. *Flower of third-year feasts*. Erechtheus founded the Pan-Athenaic festival, which was sometimes held every three years.

Lines 13–17. Athena taught Erechtheus to yoke steeds to chariots.

Lines 44–52. Eumolpus, the leader of the Eleusinians, was the son of Poseidon and Chione, the daughter of Boreas and Oreithyia, and ultimately became the King of Thrace. He aided his friends the Eleusinians against Athens.

The Parodos, **Lines 95–238**. This Chorus recounts how Athens was given to Athena, and bewails the danger in which the city is placed. It recounts some of the woes of the family of Erechtheus, and ends with the pious hope that no more may be impending.

Line 99. The sister is Athena and the brother is Poseidon. The strife was ended by the award of the gods, who gave Athens to Athena because of her precious gift of the olive.

Line 127. *violets*. The violet was associated with Athens. The "lovely violet tufts" of spring and the "violet-entwined wreaths" of Athens are mentioned by Pindar in a fragment of a dithyramb [No. 75]. See also fragment No. 47, the first motto of this play, and Aristophanes, *Knights*, l. 1329, and *Acharnians*, l. 637.

Lines 138–141. Compare Æschylus, *The Persians*, ll. 241–242: —

ATOSSA. Say, what shepherd sways their numbers? Who their army's king and lord?

CHORUS. They call no man lord and master, buckle under no man's sword.
(Campbell's Translation.)

Lines 158–159. *Pythian . . . navel*. The Pythian oracle at Delphi, who has been asked what will save Athens. Delphi was called the navel, or centre, of the world.

Lines 163–166. Athena was born full-armed from the brain of Zeus, the "chief God."

Line 191. *third wave.* That is, evil to a third daughter of Erechtheus.

Line 191. *father.* Zeus.

Line 193. *son's son.* Erechtheus, who was the son of Hephæstus the son of Zeus.

Lines 199–210. The story of the rape of Oreithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus, by Boreas, the North Wind.

Lines 211–218. The story of Procris, another daughter of Erechtheus. Her husband, Cephalus, was beloved by Aurora, the goddess of morning, and she stole him away; but Cephalus preferred his wife to the goddess, and he was allowed to go home. Athena gave Procris a javelin which she in turn gave to her husband. With this javelin, "the gift of her own hand," she was killed, being mistaken by her husband for a wild animal.

The First Episode. **Lines 239–348.** The Oracle has revealed the conditions on which Athens can be saved: a daughter of Erechtheus must be sacrificed.

Line 239. *daughter of Cephisus.* Praxithea, the wife of Erechtheus.

Lines 285–300. With this example of Stichomythia, or dialogue in which each speech is kept within the limits of a single line, compare ll. 403–420, 669–684; and *Atalanta*, ll. 453–465, 1491–1509, and 1874–1890.

Line 336. *Bright God's shrine.* Apollo's.

The First Stasimon. **Lines 349–360.** The chorus bewails the terrible message of the oracle.

The Second Episode. **Lines 361–554.** Chthonia, daughter of Erechtheus, and the chosen victim, appears on the stage with the chorus and her mother. She glories in her fate, which allows her to die for her native city.

Lines 425–427. *my father's holiest head . . . Cephisus.* The god of the river Cephisus, or Cephissus, rising at the foot of Parnassus, and running through Doris, Phocis, and Bœotia into the Eubœan gulf. Cephisus was the father of Praxithea.

Line 432. *Ilissus.* The famous river which flows through the east side of Athens.

Lines 432–438. The story of Oreithyia and Boreas. See note to ll. 199–210.

Line 436. *Intolerable to seamen.* Because he is the stormy North Wind.

Lines 442–462. The story of the strife between Athena and Poseidon for the mastery of Athens.

Lines 447–448. *first the lord . . . whose wheels.* Poseidon.

Line 451. *Triple wound.* The mark made by Poseidon's trident in the rock on the Acropolis, over which the Erechtheum is built.

Line 455. *she that reared.* Athena.

Line 459. *Pandrosus.* A daughter of Cecrops of Athens and the first priestess of Athena, who was honored with Athena in the Pandroseion, a sanctuary on the Acropolis.

Line 465. *Thriasian plain.* So named from the demus of Thria.

Line 469. *Carian folk.* Caria was a district in Asia Minor, whose people were often hired as mercenary soldiers.

Line 476. *Aonian.* Bœotian. The Aones were an ancient people of Bœotia.

Line 479. *third time.* The Eleusinians were prompted by Poseidon in their attack on Athens. Eumolpus was the son of Poseidon.

Lines 497–503. Swinburne refers to the *Erechtheus* fragment of Euripides, ll. 46–49: "Instead of the olive and the golden Gorgon, neither Eumolpus nor any Thracian will twine with wreaths the trident, upright set upon the city's foundations."

Lines 522–530. Swinburne compares Euripides, *Erechtheus*, ll. 32–40: "Verily, those who died in battle with the many have obtained as their lot a common grave and an equal glory. But to my one only child who shall die for this city one crown shall be given. And you and her who bore her and her two sisters will she save. Are not all these good? Except in giving her birth, I shall not give my daughter to die for the city. For if the city is captured, what share shall I have in my children?"

The Second Stasimon. **Lines 555–640.** A song of former woe, and the wish that the present danger, coming from the sea, may be turned aside.

Line 558. *Rhodope.* A part of the Hæmus mountains in Thrace.

Line 569. *Oreithyia.* See notes to ll. 199–210, and lines 432–438.

Line 580. *Hæmus.* A mountain range in Thrace.

The Third Episode. **Lines 641–753.** The Challenge of the Eleusinians and the Answer.

Line 704. *city named not,* etc. Athens was called of Athena's name, not of Poseidon's name.

Line 724. *Masterless of man.* Æschylus, *Persians*, l. 242. "They call no man lord or master."

The Third Stasimon. **Lines 754–889.** A lamentation for the maiden Chthonia, and a glorification of her sacrifice.

Lines 778–779. *King of Kings*, etc. Compare Æschylus, *Suppliants*, ll. 524–526: —

> O thou of blessèd gods most blest,
> Of dignities the topmost crest,
> Zeus, lord of lords.
>
> (Campbell's Translation.)

Line 828. *she.* Athena.

Lines 840–841. *birth fire-begotten.* Erechtheus was the son of Hephæstus, the god of fire.

Lines 848–849. Erechtheus was worshipped with Athena.

Lines 830–849. Note this beautiful tribute to Athena, in Swinburne's most radiant trochaic verse.

Lines 863 ff. With this passage compare the similar scenes in Sophocles, *Antigone*, ll. 879 ff., and Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, ll. 1211–1508. The similarity in the heroism of Chthonia and Iphigenia and their joy in being the instrument to save their country, is very striking. Swinburne probably had the *Iphigenia in Aulis* in mind when he planned Erechtheus, in spite of his poor opinion of Euripides.

The Fourth Episode. **Lines 890–1074.** The farewells between mother and daughter.

Line 954. *my great father's mother.* Earth.

Lines 956–961. *his . . . sightless.* Pluto, called of men by Chthonia's name, Chthonios, *i.e.* in, under, or beneath the earth, as he was god of the underworld. *staff.* In ancient statues he is so represented.

Line 983. Swinburne refers to *Oreithyia*, 655, a fragment of Sophocles: —

> ὑπέρ τε πόντον πάντ' ἐπ' ἔσχατα χθονὸς
> νυκτός τε πηγὰς οὐρανοῦ τ' ἀναπτυχὰς,
> Φοίβου παλαιὸν κῆπον.

"Over all the sea to the ends of the earth, and the springs of the night and the openings of the heaven, the old garden of the Sun."

Line 1072. *threefold band of children.* Praxithea had three daughters, besides Oreithyia and Procris: Protogenia, Pandora, and Chthonia.

The Fourth Stasimon. **Lines 1075–1190.** Chthonia's farewell to Athens, and a pæan of praise by the Chorus to Earth, the city's Gracious Mother.

Lines 1118–1119. Oreithyia was carried away by Boreas from the banks of the Ilissus. See ll. 427–438.

Line 1164. Swinburne refers to the *Danaides*, 38, a fragment of Æschylus: —

> δμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν
> ἔκυσε γαῖαν.

"And the rain, falling from the liquid heaven, impregnated the earth."

Line 1169. Swinburne refers to the *Danaides*, 38, a fragment of Æschylus: —

> δενδρῶτις ὥρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
> τέλειός ἐστι.

"The wooded summer-time is accomplished by the moist marriage."

The Fifth Episode. **Lines 1192–1241.** The Maiden's Sacrifice.

With this episode compare Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, 205–247, Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 1540–1612, Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, I, 84–100, and Tennyson, *The Dream of Fair Women* (The story of Iphigenia).

The Fifth Stasimon. **Lines 1242–1253.** The Blessed Estate of the Willing Sacrifice.

The Sixth Episode. **Lines 1254–1283.** The sisters of Chthonia, Protogenia and Pandora, slew themselves at the sacrificial altar. This brings a new fear, for the curse of guiltless blood is on the land.

The Sixth Stasimon. **Lines 1284–1484.** This magnificent chorus — "the choral presentation of stormy battle between the forces of land and sea" — is considered by Swinburne to be the best thing in the play; and is placed side by side with "the antiphonal lamentation for the dying Meleager" in *Atalanta in Calydon.*

In Swinburne's own volume of Selections this Chorus is called *Storm and Battle.* With this compare Æschylus, *The Seven Against Thebes*, ll. 39–183.

Line 1418. Compare Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III, ii, 392–393: —

> Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
> Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

The Seventh Episode. **Lines 1485–1624.** Battle, Victory, and Death. This long and magnificent speech of the Herald, ll. 1477–1584, should be compared with its fellow-speech in *Atalanta* describing the killing of the Calydonian boar, ll. 1230–1361.

The Seventh Stasimon. **Lines 1621–1644.** A Song of Triumph mingled with regret for the taint on the land by the guiltless blood of a maiden.

The Exodos, or Exodus. **Lines 1645–1761.** The Goddess Athena appears, and announces a permanent peace between the sea, the land, and the north wind, and a compact between them to defend her city Athens against all its enemies.

Lines 1682–1691. For the destruction of the Persians, see Æschylus, *The Persians.*

Line 1720. Compare Æschylus, *The Persians,* l. 242.

Lines 1727–1731. These lines refer to the three daughters of Praxithea, who died for Athens.

Line 1750. *God born of God.* From Sophocles, *θεός τοι καὶ θεογεννής, Antigone,* l. 834. — SWINBURNE.

Lines 1752–1761. An example of pure anapæstic metre. The chorus hymns the compact between land and sea.

MARY STUART

In the notes to the play we have not gone into the mazes of the story of Mary Stuart more than is necessary to understand the meaning of the drama.

For an understanding of the history of Mary Stuart and her times, a good work is T. F. Henderson: *Mary Queen of Scots: her Environment and Tragedy,* 2 vols., 1905.

Swinburne's article on Mary Stuart in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (ninth edition) contains all the essential facts, and is highly interesting as a prose statement of the substance of the trilogy. It is printed as an appendix to *Mary Stuart* in the complete edition of the *Tragedies.*

Prince Alexander Labanoff: *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Marie Stuart,* 7 vols., 1846, prints the documents on which much of the play is founded.

The Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots, 1547–1603, 3 vols., 1898–1903, also contains much of the materials of the play.

The play has been edited by W. M. Payne, whose notes deal fully with the persons mentioned. (*Belles-Lettres Series,* Boston, 1906.)

Page 179. The Greek motto is thus translated by Professor Lewis Campbell: —

"'The bitter tongue through bitter speech shall rue,
Let bloody stroke for bloody stroke be law,
The doer must suffer.' 'Tis a world-old saw."

For the significance of this motto, see the portion of the Introduction which deals with the trilogy. This motto presents the more tragic side of the story, the nemesis of Justice. *Chastelard* has three mottoes, all giving the sinister and baleful effect of the Queen upon others: —

Au milieu de l'avril, entre les lys naquit
Son corps, qui de blancheur les lys mêmes vainquit;
Et les roses, qui sont du sang d'Adonis teintes
Furent par sa couleur de leur vermeil dépeintes.

— RONSARD.

It is thus translated by Swinburne in *Chastelard*, Act V, Scene II: —

With coming lilies in late April came
Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame;
And roses, touched with blood since Adon bled,
From her fair colour filled their lips with red.

What need ye hech! and how! ladies?
What need ye how! for me?
Ye never saw grace at a graceless face;
Queen Mary has nane to gie.

— *The Queen's Marie.*

Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Occean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful evele Wommen of Nature; and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei sley him anon with the beholdynge, as dothe the Basilisk.

— MAUNDEVILE'S *Voiage and Travaile*, ch. xxviii.

The motto of *Bothwell* is from Æschylus, *Chœphoræ*, ll. 585–601. Professor Lewis Campbell translates the passage as follows: —

All-bounteous earth
Rears many a monstrous birth
Too terrible, too sad for human ear;
And 'mid the depths of land-embracing Sea
Lurk myriad forms of hostile fear;
Yea, and 'twixt heaven and earth meteors malign appear:
And beast and bird, and wind and storm, can wild and wasteful be.

But who may scan
The all-daring spirit of man
And woman, when her heart is petrified?
Who shall express how passion linked to pride
Leads from dark lust to hateful crime,
And from the female's wrongful sway, madly prevails in time
O'er married peace and household joys: and ravins far and wide?

Page 181. *first part of this trilogy,* etc. The dedication of *Chastelard* is as follows: —

"I DEDICATE THIS PLAY, AS A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE, TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS; TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE; TO THE GREATEST EXILE, AND THEREFORE TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE; TO VICTOR HUGO."

ACT I deals with Anthony Babington's plot to free Queen Mary from Chartley Castle by the murder of Queen Elizabeth, and its failure.

ACT I, SCENE I

Lines 58 ff. For this dramatic use of the picture compare *Hamlet,* III, iv, 53 ff.

Lines 111 ff. *More piteously be rent,* etc. The story of Actæon, who was changed into a stag and devoured by his own hounds for looking upon Diana bathing.

Line 160. *Ballard.* A Jesuit, who also assumed the name of Fortescue, a fellow-conspirator of Babington's.

Line 285. *her keeper.* Sir Amyas Paulet, a strict Puritan.

Line 317. *Norfolk.* The Duke of Norfolk was to become the fourth husband of Mary on the invasion of England by Spain, for which he was plotting.

Line 403. *envoy.* Châteauneuf.

ACT I, SCENE II

Line 7. *gospeller.* A contemptuous name for the Puritan Sir Amyas Paulet.

Lines 36 ff. *The letter that I writ.* This letter is very important in the play, as it is the instrument which decides Mary's fate. "It was probably at the time when a desire for revenge on her calumniatress [Lady Shrewsbury] made her think the opportunity good and safe for discharge of such a two-edged dart at the countess and the queen that Mary wrote, but

abstained from despatching, the famous and terrible letter in which, with many gracious excuses and professions of regret and attachment, she transmits to Elizabeth a full and vivid report of the hideous gossip retailed by Bess of Hardwick [*i.e.* the Countess of Shrewsbury] regarding her character and person at a time when the reporter of these abominations was on friendly terms with her husband's royal charge." — SWINBURNE.

Line 75. *Barbara.* Barbara Mowbray, Mary's personal attendant, and wife of Mary's subordinate secretary, Curle.

Line 141. *another.* The Earl of Leicester.

Line 144. *One base-born.* Simier, as we learn from the letter which Mary wrote to Elizabeth.

Line 147. *The duke her bridegroom,* etc. This was the Duke d'Anjou.

Lines 312 ff. This is one of the best imitations of Scottish popular song.

Line 336. *Poor boy,* etc. Francis II of France, Mary's first husband.

Line 348. *He.* Phillipps, who enters at l. 380.

ACT I, SCENE III

Line 109. *stretch . . . out longer.* For the expression, compare *King Lear,* V, iii, 315.

ACT II deals with the difficulties regarding the treatment of Queen Mary, in consequence of the discovery of Babington's plot. The conspirators are put to death, but Elizabeth draws back from consigning Mary to any such fate.

ACT II, SCENE II

Line 52. *conscience.* Consciousness.

Line 55. *Frenchman.* Curle.

Lines 79–160. Note this long and important speech. It brings out clearly the importance of the "famous and terrible letter," and the function in the plot of the revenge which Mary Beaton is nursing. Note that ll. 119–122 repeat the motto from Æschylus which is prefixed to the play. It is the motif of the drama.

ACT III gives the trial of Mary. "On October 14 and 15, 1586, the trial was held in the hall of Fotheringay Castle. Alone, 'without one counsellor on her side among so many,' Mary conducted the whole of her defence with courage incomparable and unsurpassable ability. Pathos

and indignation, subtlety and simplicity, personal appeal and political reasoning, were the alternate weapons with which she fought against all odds of evidence or inference, and disputed step by step every inch of debatable ground. She repeatedly insisted on the production of proof in her own handwriting as to her complicity with the project of the assassins who had expiated their crimes on the 20th and 21st of the month preceding. When the charge was shifted to the question of her intrigues with Spain, she took her stand resolutely on her right to convey whatever right she possessed, though now no kingdom was left her for disposal, to whomsoever she might choose. One single slip she made in the whole course of her defence; but none could have been more unluckily characteristic and significant. When Burghley brought against her the unanswerable charge of having at that moment in her service, and in receipt of an annual pension, the instigator of a previous attempt on the life of Elizabeth, she had the unwary audacity to cite in her justification the pensions allowed by Elizabeth to her adversaries in Scotland, and especially to her son. It is remarkable that just two months later, in a conversation with her keepers, she again made use of the same extraordinary argument in reply to the same inevitable imputation, and would not be brought to admit that the two cases were other than parallel. But except for this single instance of oversight or perversity her defence was throughout a masterpiece of indomitable ingenuity, of delicate and steadfast courage, of womanly dignity and genius. Finally she demanded, as she had demanded before, a trial either before the estates of the realm lawfully assembled, or else before the queen in council. So closed the second day of the trial; and before the next day's work could begin, a note of two or three lines hastily written at midnight informed the commissioners that Elizabeth had suddenly determined to adjourn the expected judgment and transfer the place of it to the star-chamber." — SWINBURNE. This Act is but a brilliant expansion of this summary account.

ACT III, SCENE I

Line 349. Esther saved her people; Judith slew Holofernes.

ACT IV shows Elizabeth combating the diplomacy of the French; the growing certainty of Mary Beaton's revenge; and the final determination of Elizabeth to sign the death-warrant, by reason of the "famous and terrible letter."

Act IV, Scene I

Line 78. *Wise Plato's word.* In the *Republic*, Book III, 415.

Lines 521–529. See 1 Samuel xix, 12: "So Michal let David down through a window." 1 Samuel xxi; 2 Samuel i, 21. "For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

Act IV, Scene II

Lines 240 ff. Elizabeth had asked him to put Mary to death privately, and thus remove the responsibility from her.

Lines 549–550. See Swinburne's comment on this in the extract quoted at the beginning of the notes on Act III.

Lines 612–617. The person who said this was, of course, Chastelard. See *Chastelard*, V, ii. He tells her this at their last parting. Mary Beaton has not forgotten.

Lines 756–759. See Psalm cxxxvii, 3.

Lines 772–790. *swan-song.* This song is that composed by Chastelard and sung to Queen Mary in *Chastelard*, I, ii.

Line 794. *Remy Belleau.* Rémy, or Rémi, Belleau (1528–1577), a poet of the French Pléiade.

Line 799. *Ronsard.* Pierre de Ronsard, "the prince of poets" (1524–1585), the leader of the Pléiade, was much admired by Mary. She sent him a present from her prison in 1583.

Line 809. *Madge.* Margaret of Valois.

Act IV, Scene III

Line 87. *dainty fellow.* Sir Amyas Paulet.

Line 203. *letter.* This is the "famous and terrible" letter, which plays so important a part in the drama.

Line 267. *Lupanar.* The Latin word for brothel. A pun on the Latin form of Louvre, — Lupara, and lupa, a she-wolf, l. 263.

Act V. Narrates the execution of the royal prisoner.

Act V, Scene I

Lines 1–10. A translation of the Latin hymn made by Mary on the eve of her execution: —

O Domine Deus, speravi in te!
O care mi Jesu, nunc libera me!
In dura catena, in misera poena,
Languendo, gemendo, et genu flectendo,
Adoro, imploro ut liberes me.

ACT V, SCENE II

Line 22. Psalm xlii, 1.

Line 70. *never left her . . . Till she die.* A sinister echo of a line which has appeared before. See Act II, Scene II, l. 107. "That I shall never leave her till she die." It is the last line of *Bothwell.* "But I will never leave you till you die."

Lines 82 and 101. Mary Beaton remembers these details of Chastelard's death.

Line 112. *heretic priest,* the "good Richard Fletcher," Dean of Peterborough, mentioned in V, i, ll. 105–106.

Line 122. *great psalms of penitence.* Queen Mary united portions of the 31st, 51st, and 91st Psalms.

Lines 131–133; 138–139; 159; 162–163; 164–165; 170–171. All these italicized portions are the words she actually employed, or are adaptations or translations of them. **170–171** is from *Luke* xxiii, 46.

Lines 175–176. *Voice below.* The Dean of Peterborough. *Another voice.* The Earl of Kent. It is said that his was the only voice that answered.

Lines 176–177. Mary Beaton refers to the execution of Chastelard.

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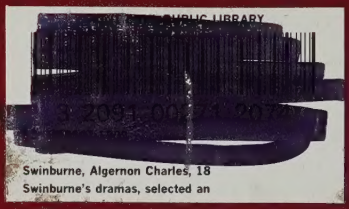

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